CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.30 JULY 1986
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CRASH

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ISSUE No. 30 July 1986

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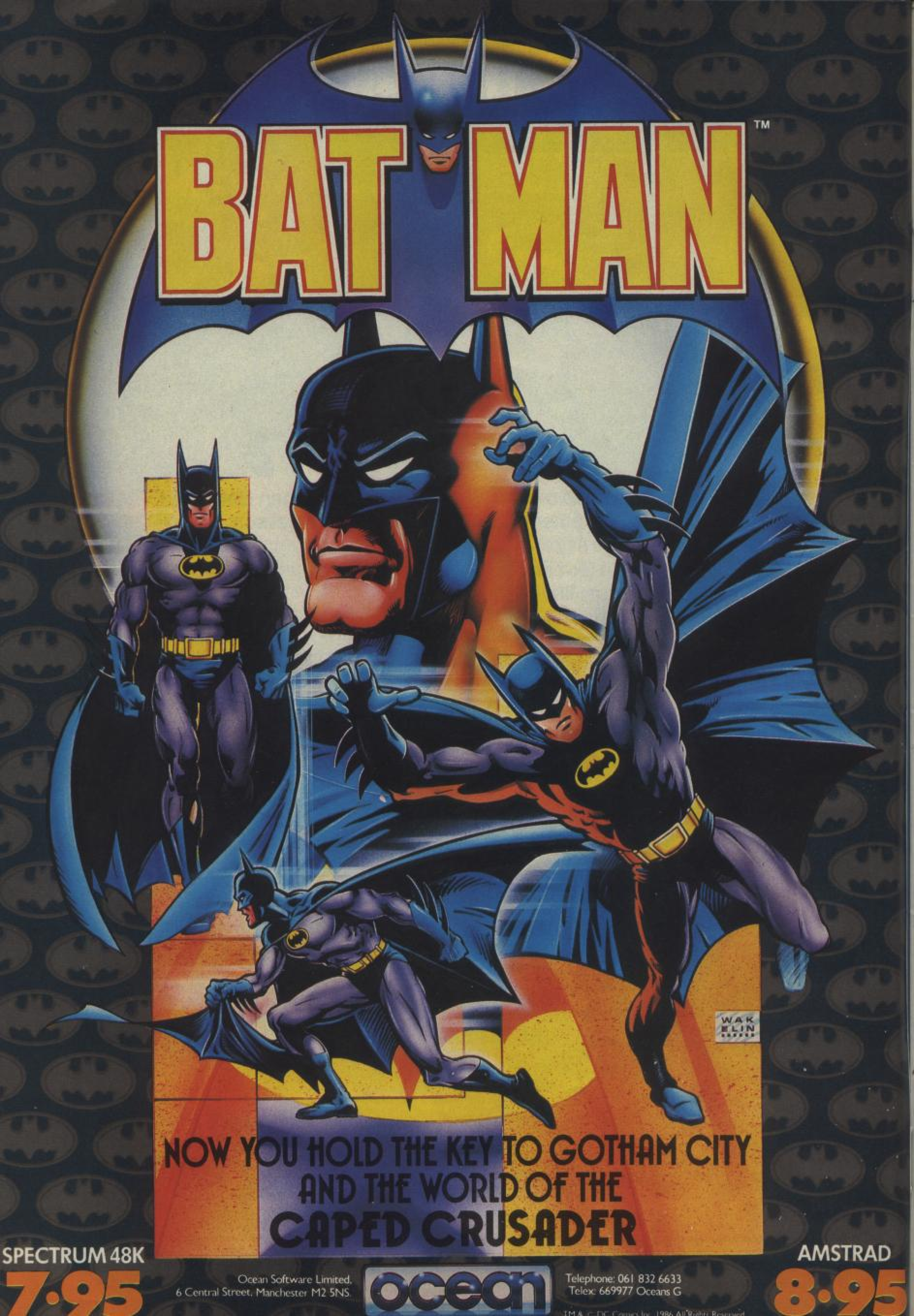
DIY

August will be a very dull month unless you pick up your copy of CRASH on 31st July!

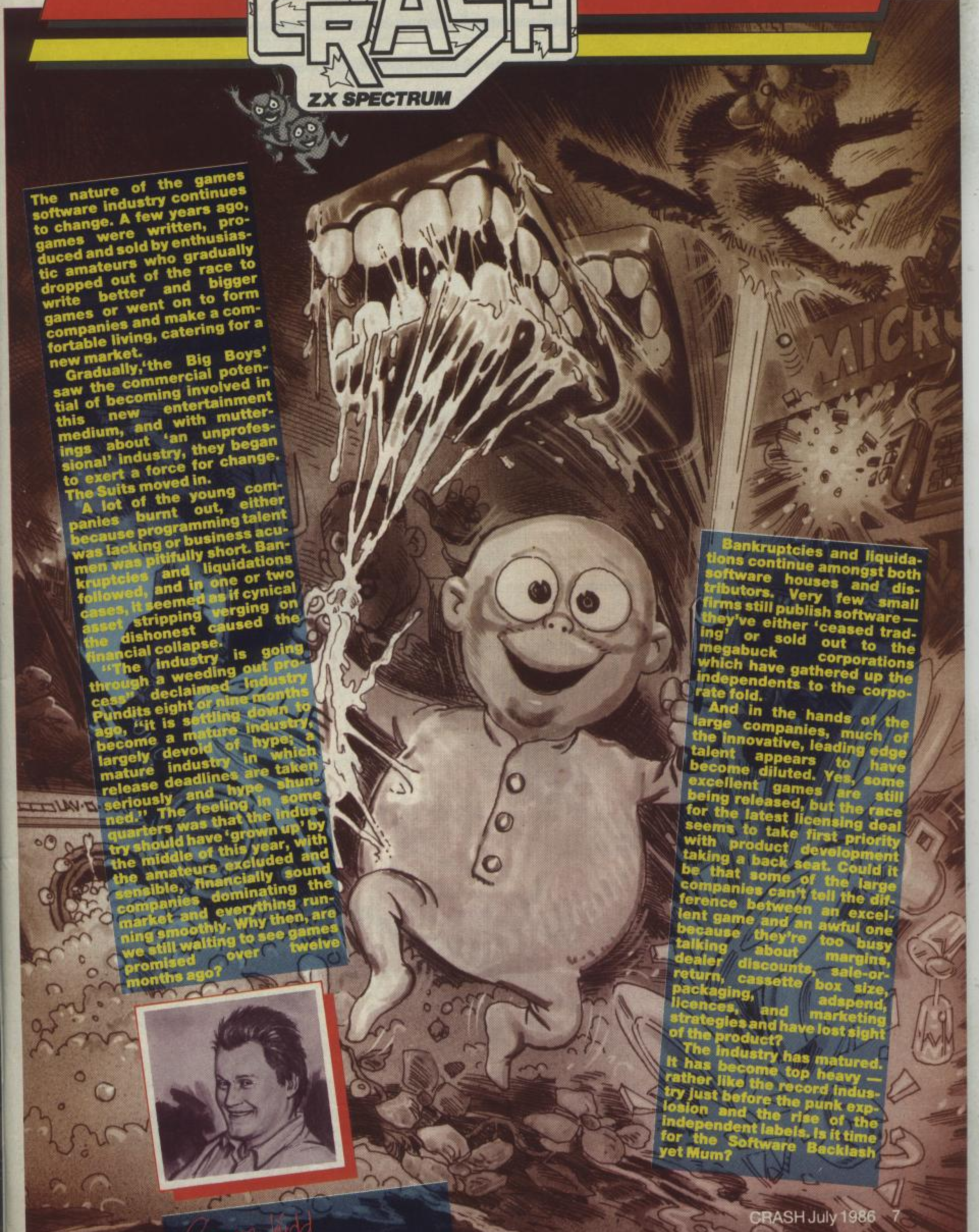


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The nature of the games software industry continues to change. A few years ago, games were written, produced and sold by enthusiastic amateurs who gradually dropped out of the race to write better and bigger games or went on to form companies and make a comfortable living, catering for a new market.

Gradually, 'the Big Boys' saw the commercial potential of becoming involved in this new entertainment medium, and with mutterings about 'an unprofessional' industry, they began to exert a force for change. The Suits moved in.

A lot of the young companies burnt out, either because programming talent was lacking or business acumen was pitifully short. Bankruptcies and liquidations followed, and in one or two cases, it seemed as if cynical asset stripping verging on the dishonest caused the financial collapse.

"The industry is going through a weeding out process" declaimed Industry Pundits eight or nine months ago, "it is settling down to become a mature industry, largely devoid of hype; a mature industry in which release deadlines are taken seriously and hype shunned." The feeling in some quarters was that the industry should have 'grown up' by the middle of this year, with the amateurs excluded and sensible, financially sound companies dominating the market and everything running smoothly. Why then, are we still waiting to see games promised over twelve months ago?

Bankruptcies and liquidations continue amongst both software houses and distributors. Very few small firms still publish software — they've either 'ceased trading' or sold out to the megabuck corporations which have gathered up the independents to the corporate fold.

And in the hands of the large companies, much of the innovative, leading edge talent appears to have become diluted. Yes, some excellent games are still being released, but the race for the latest licensing deal seems to take first priority with product development taking a back seat. Could it be that some of the large companies can't tell the difference between an excellent game and an awful one because they're too busy talking about margins, dealer discounts, sale-or-return, cassette box size, packaging, adspend, licences, and marketing strategies and have lost sight of the product?

The industry has matured. It has become top heavy — rather like the record industry just before the punk explosion and the rise of the independent labels. Is it time for the Software Backlash yet Mum?

Graeme Kidd

Hardware heroes

It seems that only Alan Sugar and Amstrad are bouyant in the home computer hardware market. Commodore have been forced to lay off staff, announcing heavy losses for the third quarter of this year yet launching the Amiga in this country at roughly the same time. Sir Clive has apparently abandoned the flat screen technology he planned to use with his Pandora portable, and the project remains shrouded in mists of uncertainty and speculation, like the LOKI (ho ho). Acorn have gone rather quiet, too.

News about Amstrad's plans for the Spectrum 'Plus Two' has just begun to leak out. The Timex plant in Dundee, one of Sir Clive's manufacturing centres, has been given the contract to make the revamped 128K machine — which is to have the datacorder 'glued on' as promised by Alan Sugar at the time of the Amstrad takeover of Sinclair.

With luck, visitors to the Personal Computer World show in September should be able to catch a glimpse of the 'new' Spectrum, which may well sell for around £150, without any bundled goodies. Will Amstrad add a joystick port? What is going to happen to the official Amstrad software scheme under which producers of software will have to apply to Amstrad for authentication of their games' compatibility with the Spectrum? Is the Office of Fair Trading going to make a fuss about the dominant position that Amstrad has secured for itself in the UK home computer market by taking over Sinclair? Could we see a disk drive for the new Spectrum, and if so will it use 3 inch discs?

All these questions, and more, may be answered before or at the Personal Computer World Show this Autumn. Alternatively, Amstrad may wish to continue playing its cards close to the chest and keep us all in suspense a mite longer. Either way, there's no danger of the supply of Spectrum software drying up, and the launch of the revitalised 128K machine may actually prompt software houses to start serious work on games designed to take advantage of the extra capabilities of the new machine. The sooner the better.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

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KERRASH!

Domark smashed, and hit

Shortly after the review of "Splitting Images" which appears on page eighteen of this issue had been sent to the printers, **Domark** encountered problems on the legal front. The company behind *Spitting Images*, the hit TV show, apparently feels that Domark's original title for the jigsaw/block puzzle game, *Splitting Images* together with the artwork for the inlay and posters, breaches their rights. Representations to the directors of Domark were made by a firm of solicitors acting on behalf of **Spitting Image Productions** with the outcome that the game is currently being repackaged. It should appear in the shops under the title *Split Personalities*.

2000AD fans take note



MacMillan Software has acquired the rights to *Rogue Trooper*, the genetic infantryman who features in the comic 2000AD. Details on the likely release date of the game are not yet available, but any improvement upon *Strontium Dog*, which had all the hallmarks of a severe Thrillsucker attack, is likely to be welcomed by comic fans . . .

More pocketmoney software

Elite have announced their intention to start a budget label, featuring 'old favourites' for the Spectrum and other machines. Negotiations have been in process for some months, and the company has acquired the rights to a respectable quantity of back-catalogue titles from firms as diverse as **PSS** and **Psion**.

As we go to press, the final name for the range has yet to be decided upon, but all the games will sell for £2.99 and be repacked in a new livery. *Valhalla*, *3D Death Chase*, *Skool Daze* and *Full Throttle* are understood to be in the running for inclusion in the launch of the new label.

Sick as parrots?

Controversy rages around US Gold's release of *World Cup Soccer*, tied in to the current World Cup fever. Retailers and distributors have complained to the company that the game is little more than a repackaged version of **Artic**'s *World Cup Soccer*, released nearly two years ago. Answering criticisms in the trade paper, CTW, **US Gold**'s Tim Chaney commented: "*World Cup Carnival* is a modified, improved, enhanced, localised version of another piece of software. It has two A2 colour posters, a cloth patch, the World Cup competition — all in addition to a better version of the game".

The issue has been further complicated by a company that specialises in selling remaindered software at cut prices — the original *World Cup Soccer* is now available to retailers for around a fifth of the price of the enhanced World Cup product. Re-order levels have been good, according to US Gold's Geoff Brown — only time and final sales figures will reveal how you, the customers, react to the US Gold launch.

Fear & Loathing

FIVE DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD



It all happened in five days, more or less, and left me so warped I'm still not fully recovered. Five days that spanned a chip buttie in Ludlow, a Champagne Breakfast and the sheer hell of a Microfair.

Chip cordon bleu au Ludlow first though. It was all that the local hostelry could provide at five minutes to closing time. And quite what I was doing there anyway is beyond me. Seven hours in a succession of British Rail's draughtiest carriages is not my idea of fun, however good the sarnie at the end of it may be.

Officially, I was in Ludlow to research a profile on the nefarious ne'er do wells of Newsfield. '*Come on up for the day*,' said Graeme, '*It'll make a nice change from The Smoke*.' I spent ten smoke free minutes catching pneumonia in the pouring rain, walking up and down King Street, searching for a likely looking doorway. I should have known. CRASH Towers is conveniently located above an off licence!

Well, I got the story . . . but if you want to read it, keep an eye on THE GUARDIAN because that's where it will appear — providing I ever get round to writing it. No. What I am trying to get over here is that I began this momentous week in a state of total exhaustion — and it got worse.

Wednesday was a launch. OCEAN inviting us all to **The Basil Hotel**. Fawlty Towers images were banished by the plush interior — though the food was fairly school dinners. Give me a good honest chip buttie any day rather than a sloshy chicken in sauce concoction!

So why were the Manchester merocrats inviting us round for lunch? Not *Street Hawk*? Not *Knight Rider*? Not likely! Instead, *Laser Genius*, their Assembler with knobs on. A strangely unglamorous product to fete like this, especially when Ocean are hardly known for wining and dining us hungry hacks. But am I the person to let such a show of hospitality stave off tactless questions? Of course not!

Avoiding the earnest young man who wanted to explain how wonderful the product was — something which I'd have to take on trust as Machine Code is as arcane to me as shark hunting is to most programmers — I cornered an OASIS representative. '*So what about the last* **Ocean IQ** *product — the so called 'Compiler' (ho, ho!) that CRASH blew the whistle on while the other mags were raving . . . ?*' And I mean raving mad for being taken in by a compiler that didn't compile!

'*Yes*,' said the spokesperson (who shall remain nameless), '*We should really have called the Spectrum version a compactor but because there were Amstrad and Commodore versions as well we couldn't treat it separately, could we?*' I leave you to make up your own young and innocent minds about this 'justification'.

Better lunch — much better — on Thursday at ACTIVISION. But by now the nerves were beginning to go. The bash was the christening of the carpets — with copious amounts of spilled beer — of Activiz's new offices up in the airy heights of arty Hampstead. Obviously MELBOURNE HOUSE's adventure game wasn't wasted on everyone . . .

The most interesting product on view will never appear on the Spectrum, owing to its need for disks. *Alter Ego* is, I am reliably informed, the only game available that lets you practise self abuse. Apparently Commodore owners like this sort of thing!

After five minutes at a machine my alter ego had hairs growing in the palms of his hands and couldn't see further than the end of his . . . nose? Neither could I, but that was purely due to my intake of excessive amounts of alcohol. Andy Wright, looking debonaire as ever, took me in hand and steered me to the balcony where I amused myself by shouting at the bourgeois peckerheads below and trying to vomit on their Volvos.

Just about recovered enough in time for Friday and the Commodore show. The Commodore show? Well yes, because to tempt every last cranked up freak out of the woodwork and to the launch of the Amiga (the £1,500 version of the Loki) they were promising a champagne breakfast. Now it must be said that the new Commodore croissant ain't bad but it takes more than one glass of Bucks Fizz at 9.30am to get the hacks to dig into their pockets and shell out for an Amiga, amigo — even at the 50% off journo's price! A great machine though, noticeably free of attribute problems.

It was at this point I ran into the Eligible Baxter but I'm not going to mention him further this month. It seems the kindest thing to do, now that he's suffering stardom after his previous appearances in this organ.

That only left the Microfair on Saturday, more crowded than ever. By this stage I was a gibbering wreck. Why was it all happening in just one week? I sought solace in the bar only to meet a certain software magnate who was busy lamenting that he's not yet a millionaire. It hardly seemed an opportune moment to blag a drink so I crept away.

And was there anything interesting at the fair? Somebody selling Memotechs, at least two C64s for sale and a repackaged QL going by the name of *Thor*, a much more fitting Norse god than Loki who was an inveterate liar. There were also lots of Sinclair owners — though not **the** Sinclair owner, Alan Sugar — but as you all failed to recognise me and apply alcoholic sustenance, I crept even further away.

So — yes — and here we are once again, deadline looming, the promised HEWSON do postponed and no corroborating evidence that (***Look, I've told you we can't print his name* — Graeme**) is a werewolf! So this month's crumpled fiver concerns last month's bondage bird, Mandy Barry. Apparently the photos that were released were all from early in the session. We'd love to see some of the later ones!

To end with a profound thought. Laurie Anderson says that technology is a parasite, destroying its host. She also quoted Bill Burroughs. Language is a virus.
Enough!
Alloha,

Hunter S Minson

PS. In reply to **Nathan Byer**'s letter last month, calling me a PCW spy, be glad you live in Taunton, kid, or I would personally come round and rip out your liver then eat it raw. As a freelance I am not a spy. I belong to that honoured brotherhood, the mercenaries who sell to the highest bidder, scumbag!



Spot the Dandy. Somewhere in this picture of the ACTIVISION and ELECTRIC DREAMS crew is the industry's sharpest dresser, but we won't let on who you are, Andy.

BIGGLES

Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Dalali**

Biggles and his time twin, Jim are in a spot of bother. Biggles! Time Twin! What's this? It's 1917 — the kind of time you would expect to find Boys Own paper air ace Biggles, but Jim is from today (as in 'Now'). Well it's the film of course, the game being based on its commercial premise that modern people don't watch WWI air ace films any more without a spot of weirdness. Back in 1917 the Germans have developed a new type of super-weapon with which they intend to win the war. Up in the eighties, New Yorker Jim discovers his time link to Biggles when he gets warped back to the Flanders battlefield. If you've seen the film then you will know that Biggles and Jim must destroy the awesome sound weapon so that the natural course of history won't be altered.

The game comes in two sections. There's the Timewarp on side one of the cassette which should be completed before continuing on to side two which features a helicopter simulation.

Timewarp is played in three concurrently running sections which must be completed in the correct order before this side of the tape can be finished.

Airborne, Biggles finds himself flying over occupied France in 1917 searching for the secret weapon testing site so that he can photograph its position. However, the enemy are on to him and Biggles must avoid the flack and German planes that attempt to blast him out of the skies. Our hero's plane is equipped with a sturdy machine gun, adequate for destroying the enemy, so long as they don't get him first.

Suddenely, Biggles and Jim, find themselves hurled 69 years into the future and onto the roof tops of London. The twinned time travelling twosome must get the secret code which gains them access to the location of the secret Sound Weapon in the second half of the game. Snipers and patrol guards are positioned all over the place as Biggles and Jim run the gauntlet across the roof tops to saftey. Contact with the policemen results in death, although they often ignore you if you keep still or crouch down until they've gone away. In leaping from roof to roof in the quest for the secret code, care must be taken any false moves send our heroes plummeting to their deaths on the London streets below.

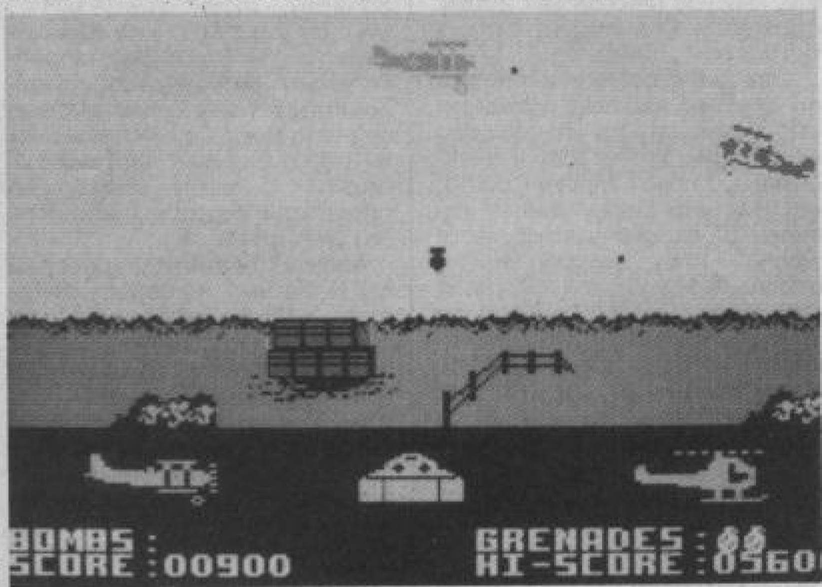
The third section in Timewarp sends Biggles somersaulting back to 1917 once more. This time, equipped with a revolver to kill any German guards in his way, he has to fight his way through battle fields to discover the posiiton of the dreaded testing ground. At the beginning of this section Biggles is given a limited number of grenades but they can be replenished along the way.

At the bottom of the screen three symbols, a plane, an ammunitions dump and a helicopter, indicate damage sustained during the three sections of Timewarp by gradually deteriorating.

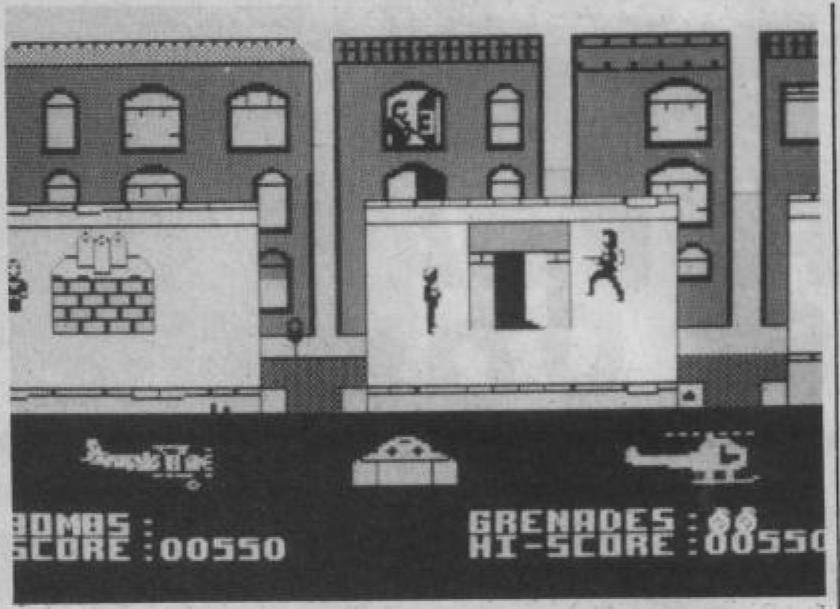
Side two of the cassette contains Sound Weapon. It is possible to play this without having finished Timewarp, but it is very difficult to complete the entire mission without the secret password given to Biggles on completion of the first section of the game. Biggles is now piloting a helicopter equipped with the very latest in 20th century technology, except that he's actually flying it over enemy lines in 1917. Using maps and all his skill as a pilot, Biggles must rescue his famed friends, Algy, Bertie and Ginger, locate the testing ground and destroy the Sound Weapon to complete the mission. Points are scored for the right objects collected and how many people Biggles has managed to rescue.

This section is played sitting in the cockpit of the helicopter with a view of the ground below seen through the windscreen. Screen centre is gunsiight, with compass points around the outside, showing flying direction. All the controls and instuments you need to successfully fly the chopper are available, but it's easy enough to crash the machine. Biggles must fly to the Allied camp first of all so that he can find out the location of the test site. This is only given in exchange for the correct password obtained on completing Timewarp.

Biggles must battle onwards to destroy the location of this Sound Weapon. There isn't a moment to lose, so it's chocks away and good luck on your mission. The future depends on you.



Irritating Erich von Stroheim over the Flanders fields.



Can Biggles leap into Fortress Wapping over the heads of the NGA (Naughty German Aggressors) to find the codewords?

CRITICISM

● **" I used to be quite a fan of the WE Johns books, and looked forward to recieving the game. Side 1, Timewarp, is quite good, and I enjoyed playing all three games, but I hoped side 2, The Sound Weapon would be better. Unfortunately, it was a case for my reviewers' law; when I want something to be particularly good, it inevitably fails to impress me. Timewarp contains some graphically unadventurous bits, but side two is a lot worse; looking at it as a flight simulator, it is neither realistic or playable, and as a game, it's a bit of a waste of time. If I bought this game, it would be for the three games on side one, which are all quite reasonable, but side two is far less enjoyable.**

● *" Wizard Prang! It's finally here and what a disappointment it is. I can't really say that I was looking foreward to this one as the whole concept of Biggles has always seemed a little naff to me, but I would have expected a little more depth and playability. The graphics are about average, the characters are poorly detailed and animated and the backgrounds are uninteresting. The sound consists mainly of spot effects although there is a tune when the game ends. I was bored very quickly as there was little going on to keep me interested for any length of time. Not compelling at all.*

● " It seems that Mirrorsoft, trying to make 'the game of the film', have divided up the various components of *Biggles* in the hope of re-creating a movie story. All this succeeds in doing is losing all continuity that the game could have had. This is most apparant whilst playing Timewarp. Being thrown between three screens at unprecedented moments doesn't add gimmick to the game but seems to distract the player's attention from the fact that all three screens have minimal playability. The flight simulation is one of the most unimaginative seen, with few in-cockpit facilities and badly defined single-colour ground objects. It seems unfortunate that Mirrorsoft could not have produced a better quality piece of software from potentially interesting subject matter.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, P up, L down, SPACE, B, M, N fire
Joystick: Kempton, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive enough
Use of colour: nothing special
Graphics: uninspired
Sound: title tune and spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: three games
General rating:

Use of computer	62%
Graphics	56%
Playability	65%
Getting started	61%
Addictive qualities	64%
Value for money	63%
Overall	63%

CLIFF HANGER

Producer: New Generation
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **James Day**

This game introduces a new concept in disposing of your enemies. No more shoot em ups; forget a quick round of fisticuffs or dose of martial artistry. Cliff Hanger,the hero in this game, is a tough talking, gum chewing cowboy who's vocation in life is to rid the Wild West of gun-toting bandits.

Cliff takes a slightly unconventional approach to his job and tends to resort to rather unusual methods of killing his victims. Boomerangs, cannon, elaborate time bombs and the faithful boulder all make up Mr Hanger's arsenal. These are shot, dropped and thrown at the foe, usually resulting in a nasty splat as the baddie is imprinted into the ground. Cliff is a cold hearted assassin and dances a little celebratory jig as each opponent is sent to Boot Hill.

The object of the game is to stop the bandit from getting to the end of the canyon in each screen. The baddie-splatting techniques get more complicated as the game progresses. Points are scored for each time the enemy is destroyed, depending on the difficulty of the manoeuvre.

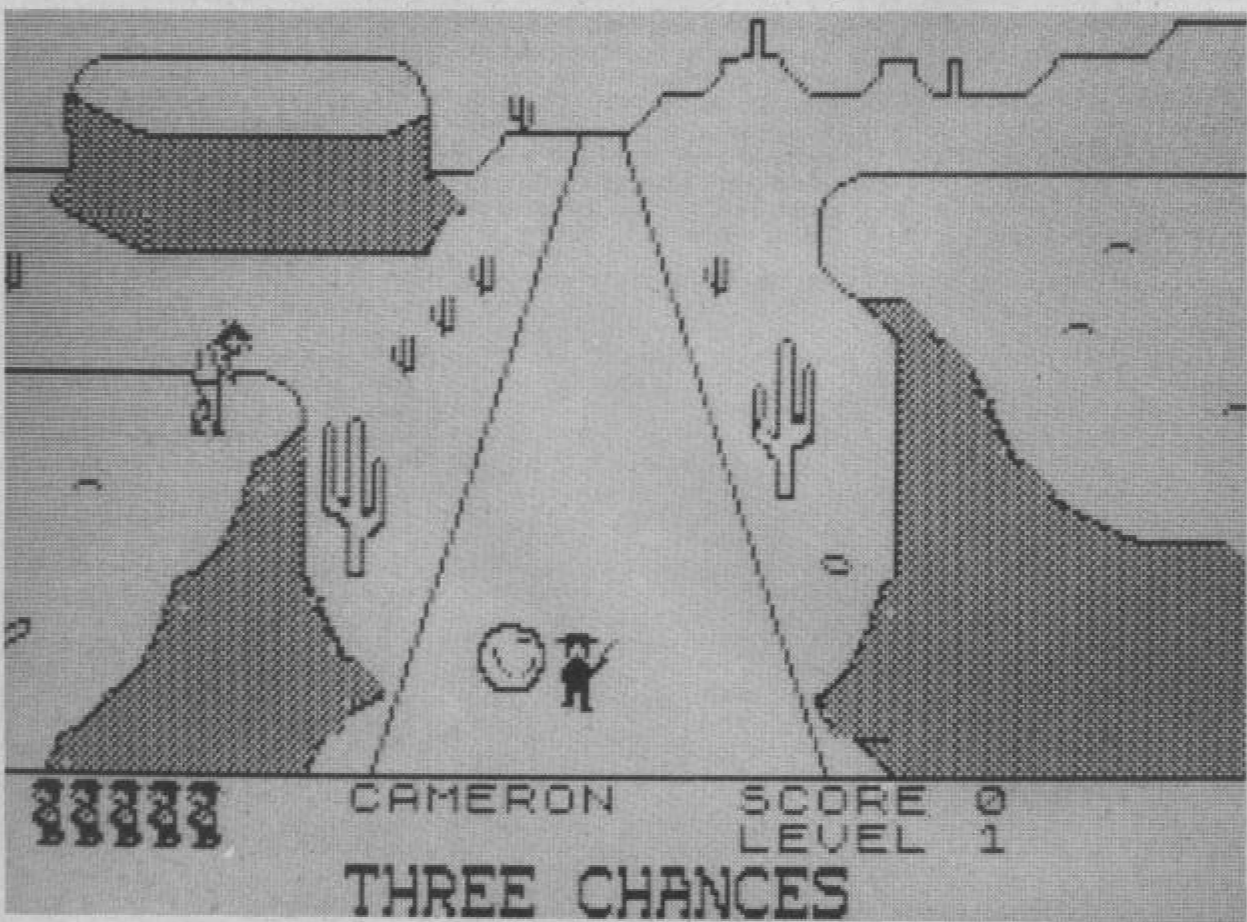
There are fifteen levels in the game, each consisting of three to five screens. The computer chooses a different screen at random until you have successfully completed all the screens on the current level. After a while, the baddies have a chance to get their own back. Boulders roll back on you unless you don't watch out, and boomerangs render you senseless unless they hit the bandit.

Cliff has five lives and loses one every time you misjudge a move and fall off a cliff top or are crushed by a runaway boulder.

The screen graphics are all in yellow and black and depict a variety of scenes from the wild west portrayed in a cartoon style. At the start of each new screen a gunshooting bandit either appears, trotting over the horizon, or lurks on the screen, hidden away somewhere. A series of objects are presented in each screen and you must decide how to use them in order to kill the bandit. Sometimes the method of killing the Man in Black may be obvious — such as rolling a rock off a cliff top at precisely the right time so that it crushes the baddie below. Other more complicated screens involve mini puzzles which include such items as levers and railway trucks, and require a series of actions to be carried out before the bad guy is killed.

Each baddie must be killed in each screen for the game to progress. Once you've worked out how to use the equipment on a screen, timing is essential if Cliff is to rid the wild and woolly west of the gun toting banditos.





"Three Chances". When Cameron rolls that boulder off the cliff is whizzes round and round, down one cliff face, along the ground, up the other side of the canyon, through the air and down the cliff . . .

CRITICISM

● **" New Generation have been quite quiet for the last few months and it's nice to see them finally bring out** Cliff Hanger, **which I can remember seeing advertised ages and ages ago.** Cliff Hanger's **presentation reminds me of the under-rated** Trashman, **and the game has a few of the** Trashman **touches as well. The game is good fun to play and kept me involved for quite a long time; what lets it down is the appalling sound and the mediocre graphics — a few small beeps and some very simply drawn colourless backgrounds respectively. Although the general look of the game is a bit poor, the idea, despite being simple, is effective. The price is a bit too high for the kind of presentation the game has got, and it would have been better released in a budget range. "**

● *" At first sight this seems to be the kind of game that you play once and then give up with, but there is something about it that makes it very playable. The graphics are below average, the characters are poorly drawn and the playing area is monochrome but the backgrounds are nicely detailed. The use of sound is disappointing: only a few spot effects here and there. The game itself plays like a Road Runner cartoon, so if you enjoy squashing people you will probably enjoy this. This isn't too bad a game, but I think it is over priced. "*

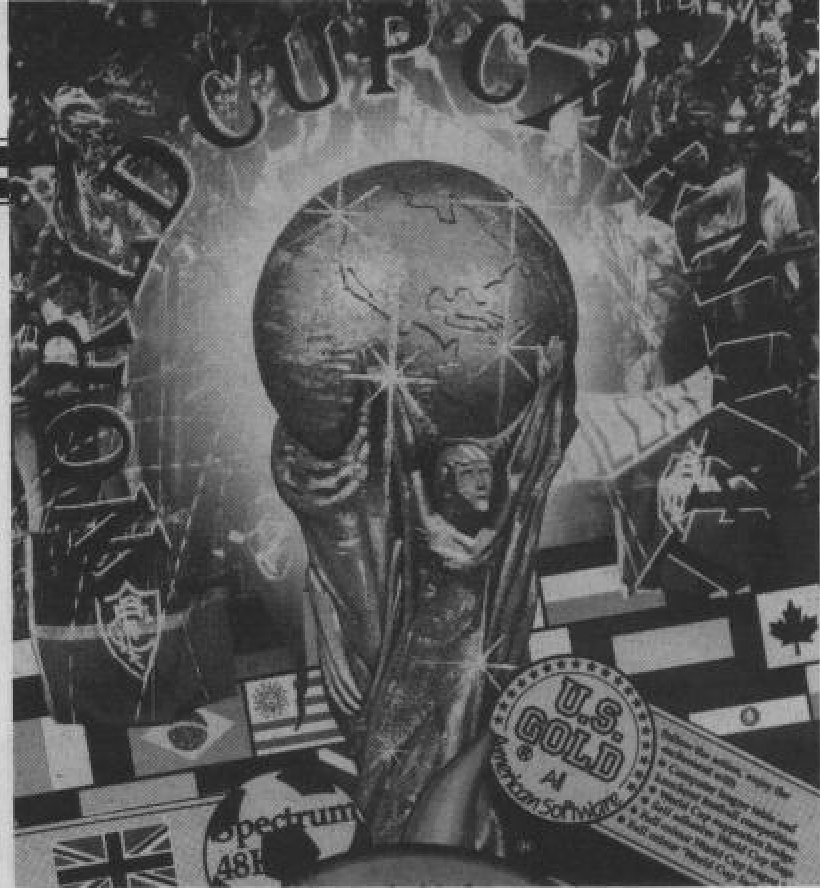
● " This is a nice game at heart. The graphics are pretty, though the monochrome display makes the game less attractive than it could have been. The game itself has some really cruel bits in it, but that makes it all the more fun! I had expected it to be a cheapie, but at eight quid, it does seem to be a good deal too expensive. Though it is addictive, and I confess to having spent a long while playing it, the fun gleaned from it doesn't seem to justify the expense. Sure, there are lots of different screens, and they get more nasty as you progress but I still think it's too expensive. New Generation had a lot of potential in this game and it would have been great as a budget title — as it is, it's definitely too expensive. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: cartoon style, simple animations
Sound: minimal spot effects, no tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: 50
General rating: Basically a good game, but overpriced

Use of computer	**66%**
Graphics	**67%**
Playability	**72%**
Getting started	**68%**
Addictive qualities	**75%**
Value for money	**56%**
Overall	**63%**

WORLD CUP CARNIVAL



Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **AS Designs**

The release of *World Cup Carnival* coincides very nicely with this year's Mexican extravaganza. Unlike the real thing, this game is played by two players who compete against each other, or by one player against the computer. The program also allows up to nine players to select teams from a list of 24 World Cup candidates.

The game begins with the players running out onto the field. About one third of the pitch is on screen at any one time, scrolling sideways as the players run down towards the goal. You only have control over the player nearest the ball, and he changes colour slightly when in possession of the ball. Kick offs and goal saves are all automatically executed

The score is displayed at the top of the screen along with a time limit. The game is played over 90 minutes, but this isn't real time — each game actually takes about three minutes to complete with an allowance for extra time at the end. Apart from the main match there is also a practice mode where you can practice ball control, penalty shooting and saving. There is also a practice match option so you can have a dummy run before going on to the real thing.

The complete package includes all sorts of World Cup memorabilia such as a wall chart with stickers to plot the progress of the real thing this summer, and a sew-on badge.

There is no strategy involved in *World Cup Carnival* and players cannot be allocated to positions according to their particular skills — the computer sorts all that out, so the only thing you have to worry about is controlling the players on the pitch and trying to score goals.

CRITICISM

● "World Cup Carnival **is an appalling game and it's a disgrace to see a big software house like US Gold releasing it. The layout of the football pitch is as basic as you can get — no centre circle, no penalty area, no six yard box and no supports for the goals. The graphics are very bad, with footballers who would look out of place in one of the first Spectrum games. The clock counts down and not up which is very confusing and the teams don't even swap around for extra time. US Gold have stuck to the bog standard Spectrum character set. I couldn't find any music to listen to even though there is an on/off option for music! All I can say about this game is there is a nice whistle effect and the packaging is great. This game is awful; avoid it at all costs "**



Algeria play Scotland on the screen of WORLD CUP CARNIVAL. Scotland are doing rather better on screen than they are for real . . .

● *"This is the worst football simulation I have ever seen. Playing the game is a little too easy unless you happen to have a colour TV or monitor — when the colours used are very bright and eye strain occurs after a few games. Controlling your man is not difficult, although sometimes the computer's choice of the 'man nearest the ball' is a little strange. The graphics are very poor, the players only have two stages of animation and there are many bad attribute problems. The players are a bit better. Sound is poor; if you're lucky you might hear the odd whistle being blown. On the whole I wouldn't be too happy if I forked out two quid for this one, let alone a tenner. The pack of World Cup bumph makes up for it a little, but not enough for me to recommend it to any one. "*

● "Not exactly a mega-game this. In fact it's not much of a game at all. The game itself is sub-standard, but all the freebies are quite good; but then, they have to be, because I don't think many people will buy the package for the game itself. Maybe football freaks will enjoy it, but I can't see anyone flipping over it. The colour is intially quite helpful, but when the clashes start making the players disappear — things get a bit out of hand! Overall, it's not an awful game — US Gold have made a lot out of the World Cup deal, what with all the accompanying bits, but the game itself lacks any real outstanding elements. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: Player one: 1 up, Q down, S right, A left, bottom row to kick; Player two: 0 up, O down, K right, J left, bottom row to fire. P pause, H instructions
Joystick: Kempston, cursor
Keyboard play: okay
Use of colour: severe clashes at times
Graphics: far from 'state of the art'
Sound: pardon?
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling window for match, plus penalty screens
General rating: Nice freebies, shame about the recycled two-year old game!

Use of computer	32%
Graphics	25%
Playability	19%
Getting started	30%
Addictive qualities	21%
Value for money	25%
Overall	**26%**

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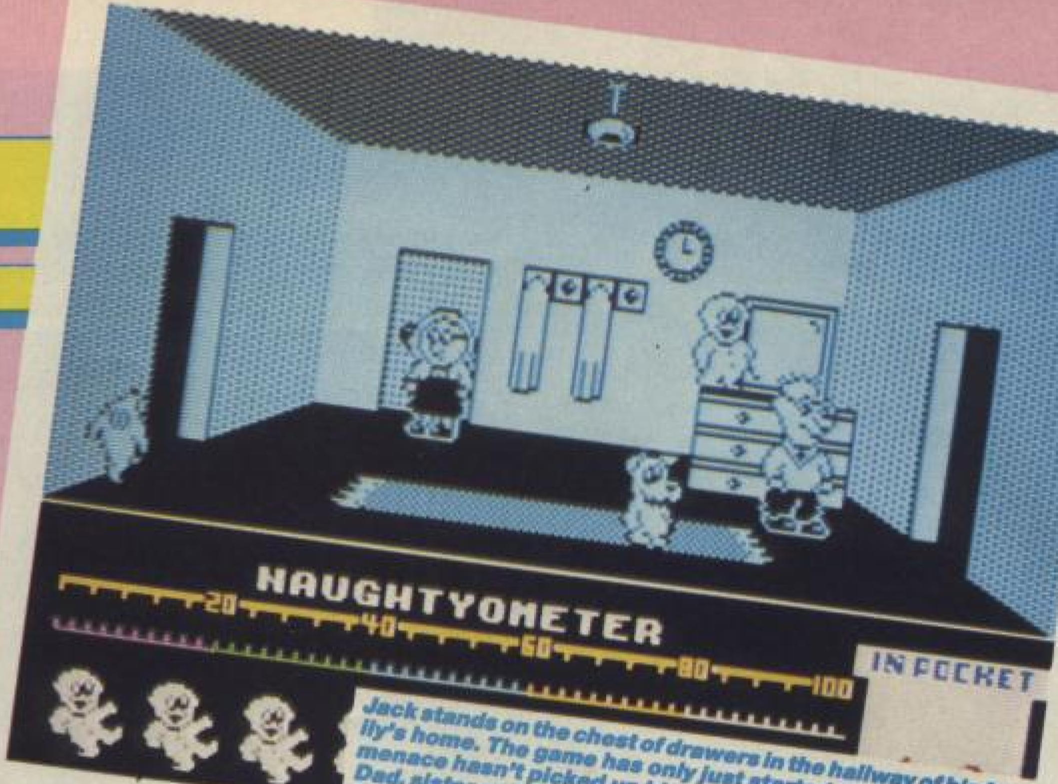
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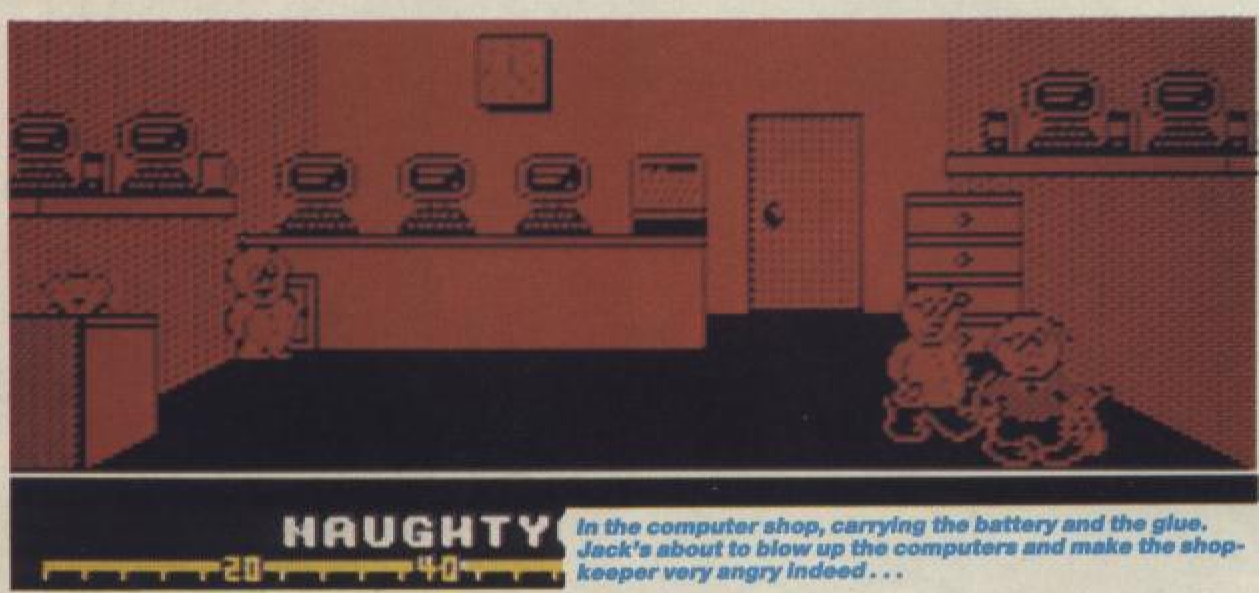
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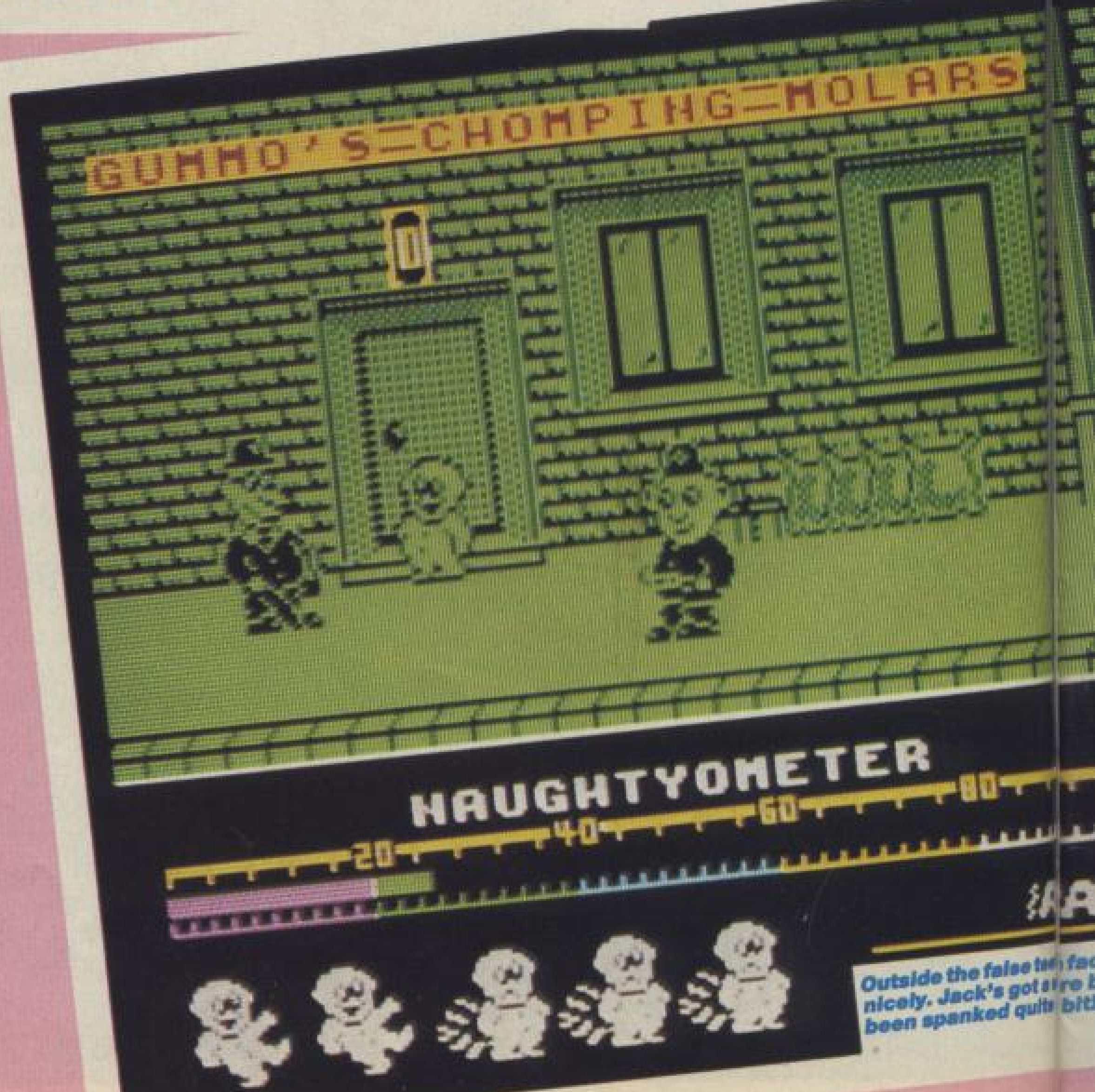
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Jack stands on the chest of drawers in the hallway of his family's home. The game has only just started and the would-be menace hasn't picked up his pea-shooter yet. Silly boy. His Dad, sister and the family dog stump around the hall, oblivious to the scary ghost!



In the computer shop, carrying the battery and the glue. Jack's about to blow up the computers and make the shop-keeper very angry indeed . . .



Outside the false tee fac
nicely. Jack's got a re b
been spanked quite bit

Producer: Gremlin Graphics
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Greg Holmes**
(with John Holmes)

J·A·C·K T·H·E N·I·P·P·E·R

A CRASH Smash

Jack seems to be the all time greatest World Champion in naughtiness: a naughtier boy you could not wish to meet in fact or fiction. You think that saying BOO to Granny is naughty? Pah! Jack is in a whole different league — he blows up police stations on particularly naughty days. This is a level of rascallity that most boys and girls will never be able to achieve, even in their wildest dreams. Realising this, **Gremlin** decided to base a game around the naughtiest nipper in town.

As Jack's controller the idea is to get the little sprog to cause as much grief and hassle as possible without getting the little tyke into trouble for his misdeeds. Job number one is to equip the romper-suited yobbo with a weapon. He's not a particularly big chap, so a spitball firing pea-shooter is what's needed. And luckily enough, it just happens to be placed on a shelf in Jack's bedroom. Unluckily enough it has been put on a high shelf well above the nipper's miniscule reach — probably hidden away by an oft-peashootered parental.

Jack's sproing and cavort factor, the product of a couple of years of packing away the Farleys rusks and creamy baby food, makes him hyperactive (probably all that E102.) Anyway, with a mere wiggle of the joystick or prod of the appropriate keys, it's possible to propel this pint sized person skyward with the greatest of ease.

CRITICISM

" How could this game possibly fail to be hit? It's just so appealling in both presentation and playability. The graphics are masterful, involving a previously ignored monochrome cartoon style that makes Jack look as though he's just leapt out of the Beano. Gremlin have definitely come up with a winner in Jack the Nipper: **gameplaywise things are fairly similar to many arcade adventures though the tasks to be performed really are quite funny. While the puzzles are not immediately obvious they aren't overly hard either. The graphic style perks up the game no end. Overall an excellent game that well worth the price — run out and have a look at it today. "**

CRITICISM

" 'Come on, play the game! You're not a wimp are you?' asks the evil Sweeny Toddler character, an evil gin spread across his cheeky little fizzog. How can you resist such a challenge? The aim of the game — being as naughty as possible — is a novel and amusing one and the way you have to go about it is even better! Blowing up Police stations, ruining factories, shooting bobbies with a pea-shooter is all part and parcel of an average day in the romper suit of the world's wickedest baby. The graphics are excellent and really give a cartoony feel to the game — go out and get it now! You're not a wimp are you? "

A few well-timed jumps put Jack where he wants to be and he has two pockets in his suit for carrying useful menacing items.

Leaping around on the furniture soon brings the vegetable propelling tube within Jack's tiny grasp. Now the mayhem can really begin . . . Jack's task is to complete around twenty dastardly stunts to boost his naughtyometer up to the hundred per cent mark. There are hazards, however, and when you're as young as Jack one of the main problems with day to day life is dreaded botty rash caused by a wet and soggy nappy. Collisions with any of the other characters in the game aggravates this condition, as they mete out a good hiding to the miscreant. Jack's Rash Rating climbs on a bar in the status area, and one of the five live available is lost each time the Rash Factor goes critical.

Parents and shopkeepers give chase whenever a naughty deed is done in their presence, and ghosts also give Jack trouble. Luckily, Jack's pea-shooter can be used to exorcise spectres — more often than not a ghost will disappear with a pea in its ear. Peablasting anybody else, including Bonzo, the Nipper's pet dog, causes them to chug after you and increase poor little Jack's Rash at an alarming rate.

CRITICISM

" Jack the Nipper is a brilliantly presented game with a good title tune, a fun attract mode and little comments that pop up now and again and make it fun to play. All of the characters are drawn with expert precision and are animated very smoothly. The game, although basically monochromatic, is still appealing to the eye and has smart shaded backgrounds that are very detailed. Monsters look out of windows and posters stuck on the walls advertise products, to mention a few of the highlights. The little touches, like the nappy rash bar and the naughtyometer, make the game a bit different from the usual arcade/adventure stuff and you don't have to be good at the game to enjoy playing it. Gremlin Graphics have brought out a game that will shine out in the depression of Summer. "

Naughty points are won for completing each of the tasks set out for Jack, most of which involve taking the right object to the right place. For example, Jack can scare the insides out of cats by finding a horn and honking it next to a slumbering pussy. Jack's naughtyometer pops up nearly as fast as the poor old moggy, which is left clinging by its claws to the ceiling. What a naughty chap! Extra naughty points can be collected by taking objects and dropping them from a great height so that they smash.

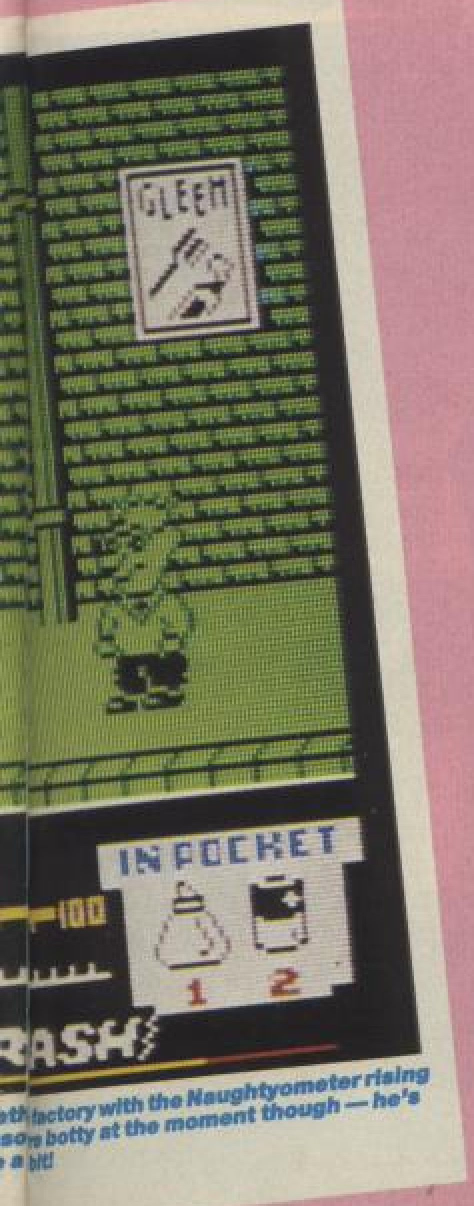
The town consists of some fifty locations portrayed in a semi 3D way, and all the characters have been drawn in a cartoon style reminiscent of Willy the Kid and other comicbook heros. Jack can move left, right and in and out of the screen in the same way old Grumpy Gumphrey moved round in *Supersleuth*. The objects Jack is carrying are shown in a pocket at the top of the status area, and some careful juggling is sometimes needed to make sure the right item gets to the right place.

Lose all the lives and the game's over and little Nipper trolls onto the screen with a sarcastic appraisal of your attempts at menacing. Ah well, never mind, living up to the expectations of the naughtiest nipper alive is not an easy task. Closet vandals will have lots of fun with *Jack the Nipper*.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, O up, K down, 0 fire, ENTER go through door, Up and Fire to jump, Direction and Fire to shoot, H toggles pause mode, Q quit
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive, but slightly odd layout
Use of colour: monochromatic cartoon; tidy
Graphics: very apt — lovely cartoon characters
Sound: jolly tune in attract mode plus spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 50 locations
General rating: A great game for all you naughty types . . .

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	93%
Playability	93%
Getting started	92%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**93%**



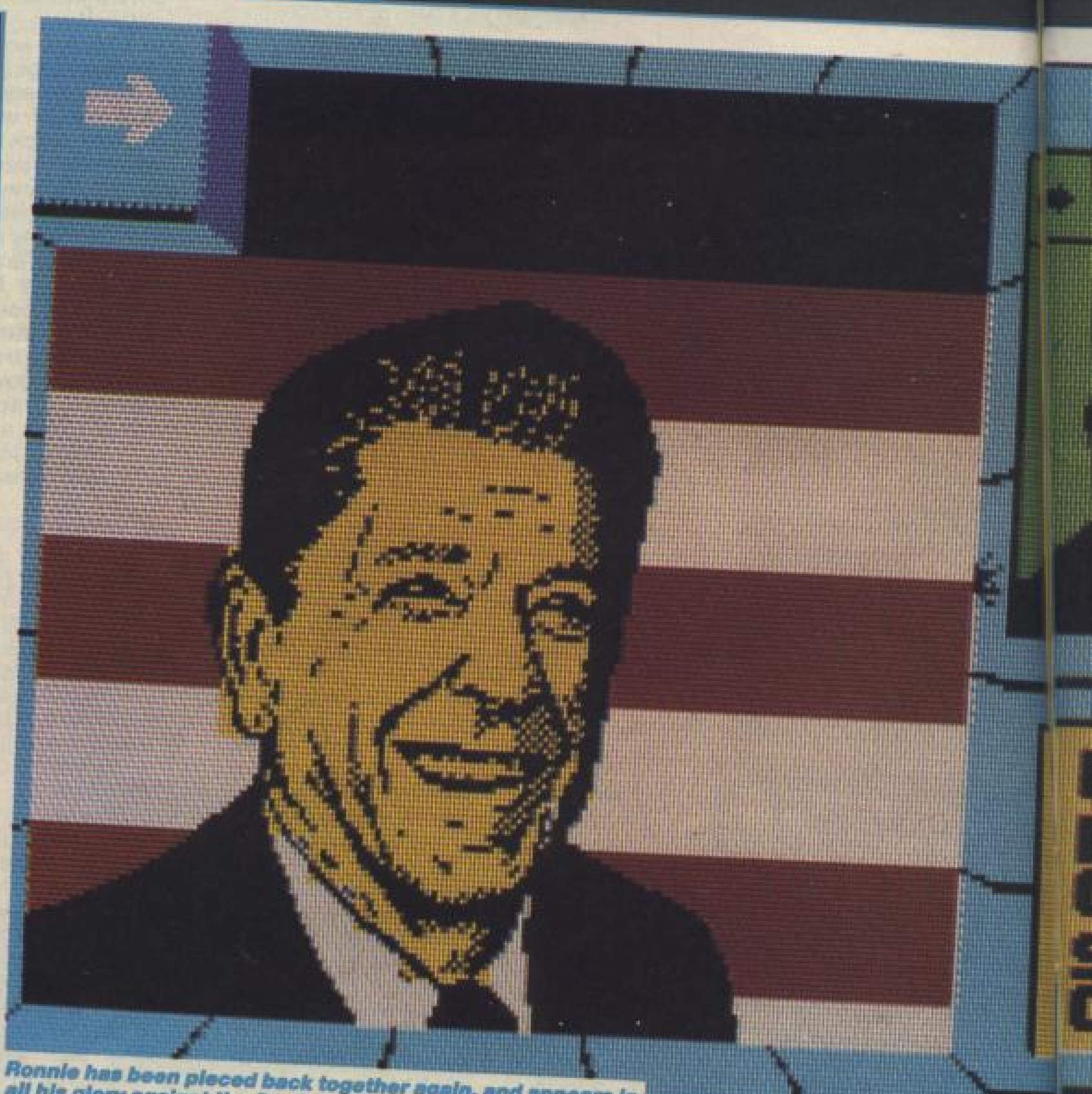
...th factory with the Naughtyometer rising ... so... botty at the moment though — he's ... a bit!

Maggie seems to have gone to pieces. That's well out of character for the Iron Lady



Producer: Domark
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Ernisoft**





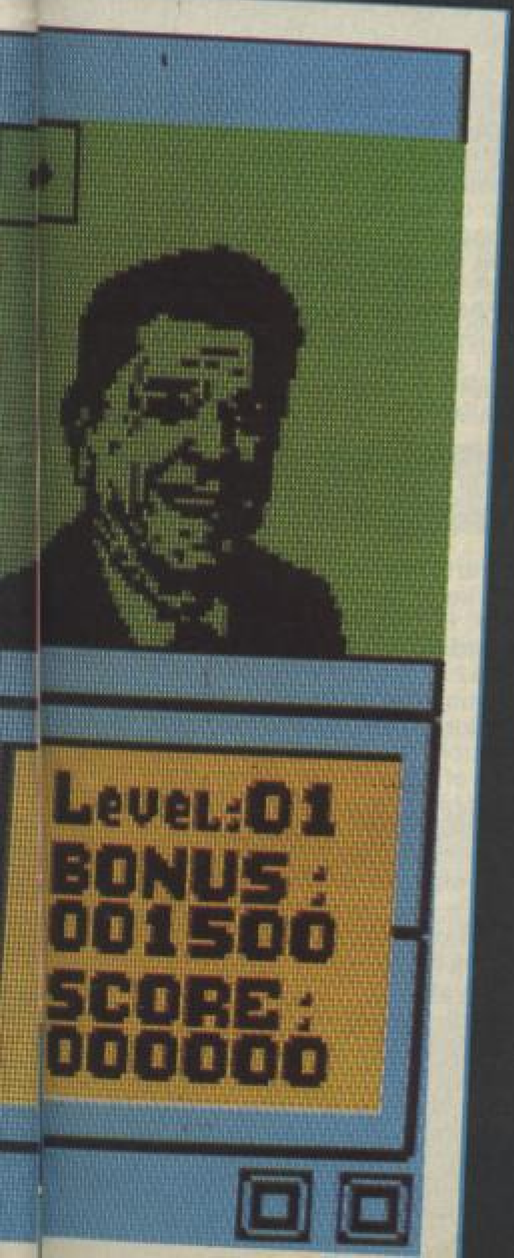
Ronnie has been pieced back together again, and appears in all his glory against the Stars and Stripes. Pity Humpty Dumpty didn't have a chance to get the benefit of SPLITTING IMAGES

•P•L•I•T•T•I•N•G I•M•A•G•E•S

A CRASH Smash

Sliding block puzzles and jigsaws are as old as the Ark, but **Domark** and the Dutch software house **Ernisoft** have come up with a new, computerised variant. Although the name might suggest a tie-in with a certain TV program — don't be fooled, there's no wicked satire to be found in this game, and rubber puppets don't appear. All you have to do is work against a time limit and assemble caricatures of the famous from little blocks.

All you have to do? Well not quite. Starting with Ronald Regan, ten cartoons of famous faces have to be pieced together if the game is to be played through to the end. At the start of each level the main playing area is empty — a zone enclosed with blue buffers. A pulsating square cursor is under your control and sits under a flashing arrow at the top left of the screen. The image that has been split appears in a small window in the status area on the right, the bar display that monitors the time you have remaining is refreshed, and play commences.



The cursor is used to shift the blocks around in the playing area. It can be moved in four directions, and once the cursor has been placed over a piece to be moved, pressing fire grabs the block. Holding fire and then moving the cursor whizzes the selected block off in the chosen direction. A moving block continues to travel in a straight line until another block or the blue buffer is hit, when it comes to rest. Pieces are brought on to the playing area by zipping the cursor under the flashing arrow, pressing fire to seize the hidden piece and moving right to fetch it into view. While the cursor is over a piece in the main play area, one of the squares on the little status panel picture turns white, revealing the correct location for that segment of the puzzle.

Twenty pieces have to be shuffled into the right order to make up each picture, and there are only four spare block positions at the top of the playzone — so some careful juggling is called for. Just to add a little variety to the game, cracks appear in some of the buffers. Blocks that are moved onto a cracked section of buffer bounce off, returning to their start point. Some of the cracks remain in the same part of the buffer throughout a level, while others hop around the place during play. Little sliding doors in the top, left and bottom buffers open and close. While a door is closed it acts as a normal section of buffer, but if a piece is shoved towards an open door it disappears from the playing area and joins the queue of pieces behind the flashing arrow.

Every so often, objects associated with the character whose likeness is being assembled are dragged into play. These objects can lead to bonus scores if you do the right thing with them — shoving the American Flag against the Russian flag for instance, earns a bonus of 1,500 points on the Ronnie Regan screen. If one object is thrown against another object, they both dematerialise and if the right pairing has been achieved the bonus value flashes up at the point of collision before being added to the score.

Bombs are bad news — they explode five seconds after they are brought into play and have to be shoved against a tap (bonus of 5,000 points) or whisked out of an open doorway before they detonate. Failure to dispose of a bomb results in an explosion and the loss of a life. Other objects appear at random and can be combined: throwing a pistol against a bullet doubles your bonus score on that level, while matches and fuel should be kept well apart!

The number of points awarded for completing a level depends on the amount of time remaining when the final piece is slotted into place. Running out of time results in the loss of a life — but providing all three lives haven't been lost, the blocks stay in place when you die. An extra life is awarded for reaching 100,000 points and extra time can be won on later screens by sliding a diamond into another gem.

CRITICISM

" While this game has almost nothing in common with the TV series it isn't based on, I thought it was great. The caricatures of the characters are excellent, and the game moves at a very rapid pace, which adds to the fun. Things like the bombs and other bonus elements contribute towards this too, making it an extremely playable game. The graphics and sound effects are nicely executed, and the game is highly addictive, with that 'one more little go' element about it. I like it. It's nice to see Domark getting their act together after the awful Friday the 13th. **"**

CRITICISM

" This is definitely the best Domark game ever! I know that's not saying much, but Splitting Images **IS a really good game, and the most surprising bit about it is that the game is so simple in construction. The presentation is well above the normal Domark stuff and suits the game perfectly — simple but stunning. I found** Splitting Images **was totally compelling from the first time I picked up the joystick. The graphics are excellent with very smooth scrolling and some nice sound effects. Domark seem to have got the right balance of difficulty, with the 'Reagan' screen being easy to get past and 'Maggie' being a bit harder, and each subsequent level presenting that bit more of a challenge. The game features lots of nice bonuses, which can improve your score tremendously and keep you addicted to the game for ages. I would recommend you buy this, as it's definitely something different from the normal game. "**

CRITICISM

" Well done Domark, you've finally broken your spell of releasing poor games. I am well impressed. This is a very original, playable and compelling game. The graphics are colourful, detailed and generally well 'finished'; the characters are all recognisable; the sound is nice too — there is a tune at the beginning and some very reasonable effects during the game itself. Playing the game can be a bit tricky until you get the hang of the control, but once you do, the action gets fast and furious. Disposing of the bombs is also tricky, and going for bonus scores means some extra thinking is called for. I enjoyed playing this one as it is fun and fast moving. "

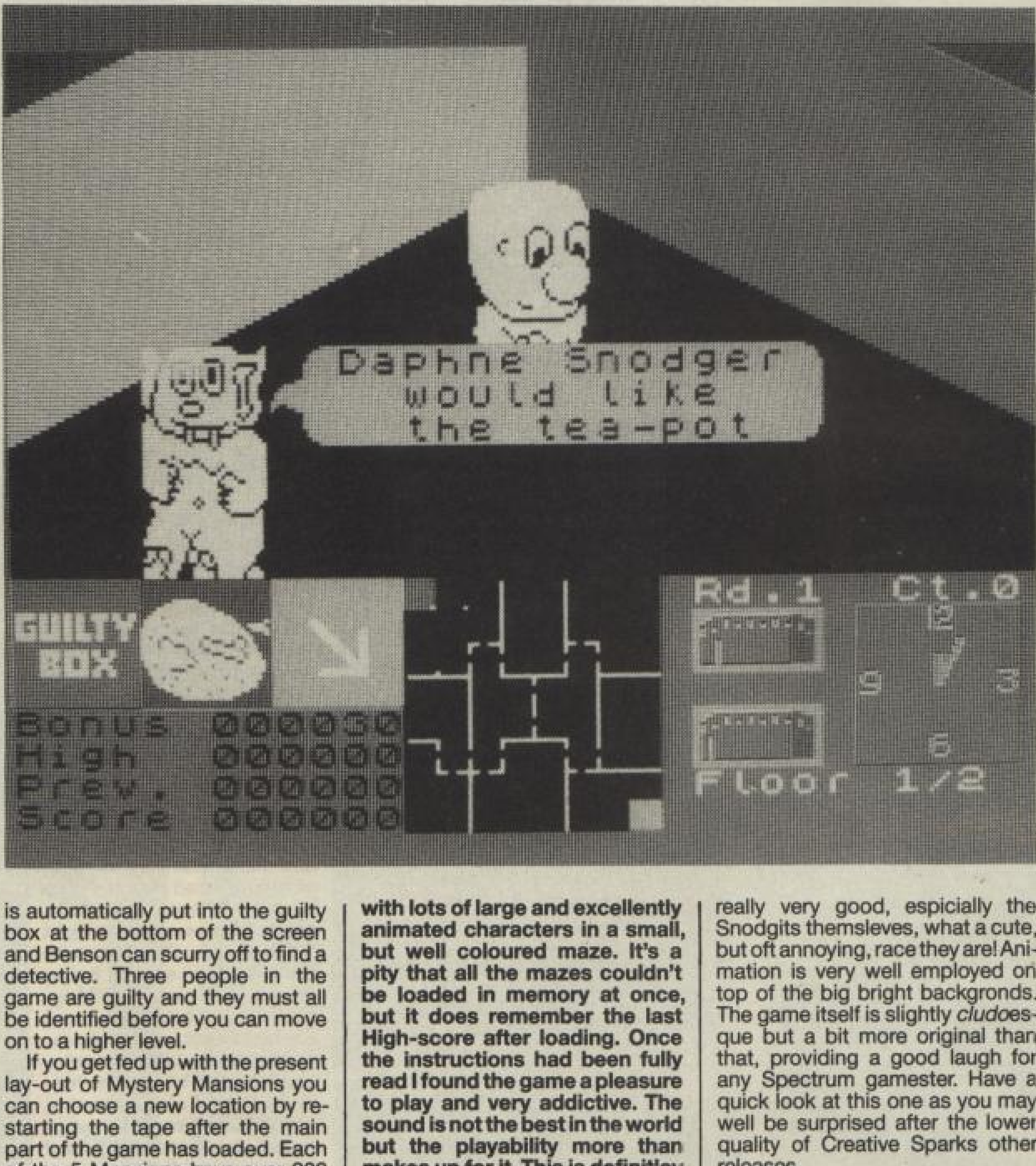
COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, P right, Q up, A down, CAP SHIFT to SPACE fire, R and T abort, H pause, J continue
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive, but a bit tricky
Use of colour: neat — no clashes
Graphics: fast moving; good caricatures
Sound: start and end tunes and spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: ten
General rating: A different, compelling and original game.

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	88%
Playability	89%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	
Value for money	87%
Overall	**90%**

SNODGITS

Daphne Snodger would like the tea-pot, go on, there's only 200 rooms it could be hidden in.



Producer: Sparklers
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Martin Harris**

S*nodgits*, or *Did The Butler Do It?* as it could be called, is a classic Whodunnit from Sparklers. Menace is afoot at Mystery Mansions as objects go missing causing chaos in the Snodger household. It's not that the objects are particularly valuble but the whole business is making life a misery for Benson the trusty old Butler. What is he to do when Lord Snodger asks for his slippers and they are no where to be found? Life would be all the more simpler if these odd occurances could be blamed on the mischievous Snodgits, pets of the Snodger family as they are always making mischief. However, Benson, who has a nose for these things, is doubtful. Such is the problem that an impressive array of prestigious Detectives and Detective-esses have assembled at Mystery mansions to try and discover who the culprit is. But are they all as blameless as they would like to suggest? While everyone else is running around in ever decreasing circles trying to get to the bottom of the matter, Benson plods steadfastly onwards in his own inimmitable fashion trying to clear his own name as much as anything else.

Benson must trudge around Mystery Mansions trying to locate stray objects that are required by the Snodgit family. Clues to what these objects might be are given to Benson by the loveable Snodgits. For example, one might approach Benson and say, Daphne wants the candlestick and Benson must try and find out where it has been mislaid. Mystery Mansions is not small by Stately Home standards with over 200 rooms. Benson's task is aided by a map at the bottom of the screen with the butler represented by a green square and the sought object by a purple square. Maybe the object is carried by someone else? Or it might be on another floor — whatever, poor old Benson must battle it up and down the stairs in search of it.

Once the correct object has been given to the correct person, Benson gains access to the Clue Table. Now he can begin the task of finding out who is responsible for the disappearing objects. The Clue Table is two blocks of rows and columns showing a list of objects and suspects. Each row of suspects relates directly to the objects shown. A question is asked such as, Who snodged the Teapot? and Benson, using his Butler's intuition must decide who the guilty party might be. If he makes a wrong guess then he must deliver another object or find a Snodgit to snodge with. However, if he makes the correct link between object and suspect then the guilty person is automatically put into the guilty box at the bottom of the screen and Benson can scurry off to find a detective. Three people in the game are guilty and they must all be identified before you can move on to a higher level.

If you get fed up with the present lay-out of Mystery Mansions you can choose a new location by re-starting the tape after the main part of the game has loaded. Each of the 5 Mansions have over 200 rooms and each level has a higher number of floors which must be examined.

The game carries on until Benson runs out of lives. At the bottom of the screen is a Snodgometer and a Bodgometer. A life is lost on the Snodgometer every time Benson bumps into a Snodgit and a life is lost on the Bodgeometer everytime Benson is clumsy and bumps into bits of furniture or walls.

Have you brains enough to assist Benson discover who is the thief of Mystery Mansions, or will it remain forever a secret?

CRITICISM

● **" *Snodgit* seems to me to be one of the most original games around at the moment, and in a budget range as well. The whole look of the game is very pleasing with lots of large and excellently animated characters in a small, but well coloured maze. It's a pity that all the mazes couldn't be loaded in memory at once, but it does remember the last High-score after loading. Once the instructions had been fully read I found the game a pleasure to play and very addictive. The sound is not the best in the world but the playability more than makes up for it. This is definitley one of the better budget games around at the moment.**

● " *This one feels a lot like* Popeye *as you control the same sort of large character, the main difference being that you are playing in a 3D area. The graphics are not as clear as they could have been and as a lot of colour is used there are many attribute problems. The characters are well animated and detailed, but the sound is poorly used there are only a few sopt effects every now and then, this is a shame as it would have added to the atmosphere of the game. Generally* Snodgits *is a very good deal for two quid as it is compelling and playable.*

● " What an instantly pretty game, much prettier than the average budget release and I suppose that is just what is supposed to attract the end user into purchasing it. Graphgically *Snodgits* is really very good, espicially the Snodgits themsleves, what a cute, but oft annoying, race they are! Animation is very well employed on top of the big bright backgronds. The game itself is slightly *cludo*esque but a bit more original than that, providing a good laugh for any Spectrum gamester. Have a quick look at this one as you may well be surprised after the lower quality of Creative Sparks other releases.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1 left/anti-clockwise, 2 right/clockwise, 9 up/walk, 8 down/walk
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: good — two modes, directional and rotational control
Use of colour: plain and simple
Graphics: large and attractive
Sound: tweets and burbles
Skill levels: one
Screens: five houses

Use of computer	**74%**
Graphics	**75%**
Playability	**76%**
Getting started	**72%**
Addictive qualities	**77%**
Value for money	**78%**
Overall	**77%**

ULTIMATE
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WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

"Once you start playing the game it becomes increasingly clear that Ultimate have produced yet another excellent game. The playing area is huge and there are some excellent graphical effects like the stars which are beautifully parallaxed."
"Playability wise Cyberun is an excellent game."
"The inlay card doesn't give much away, so it is a challenge just to find out what all the various goodies are for."
"This is a classic shoot 'em up which I'm sure all fans of Lunar Jetman will enjoy."
CRASH May 1986

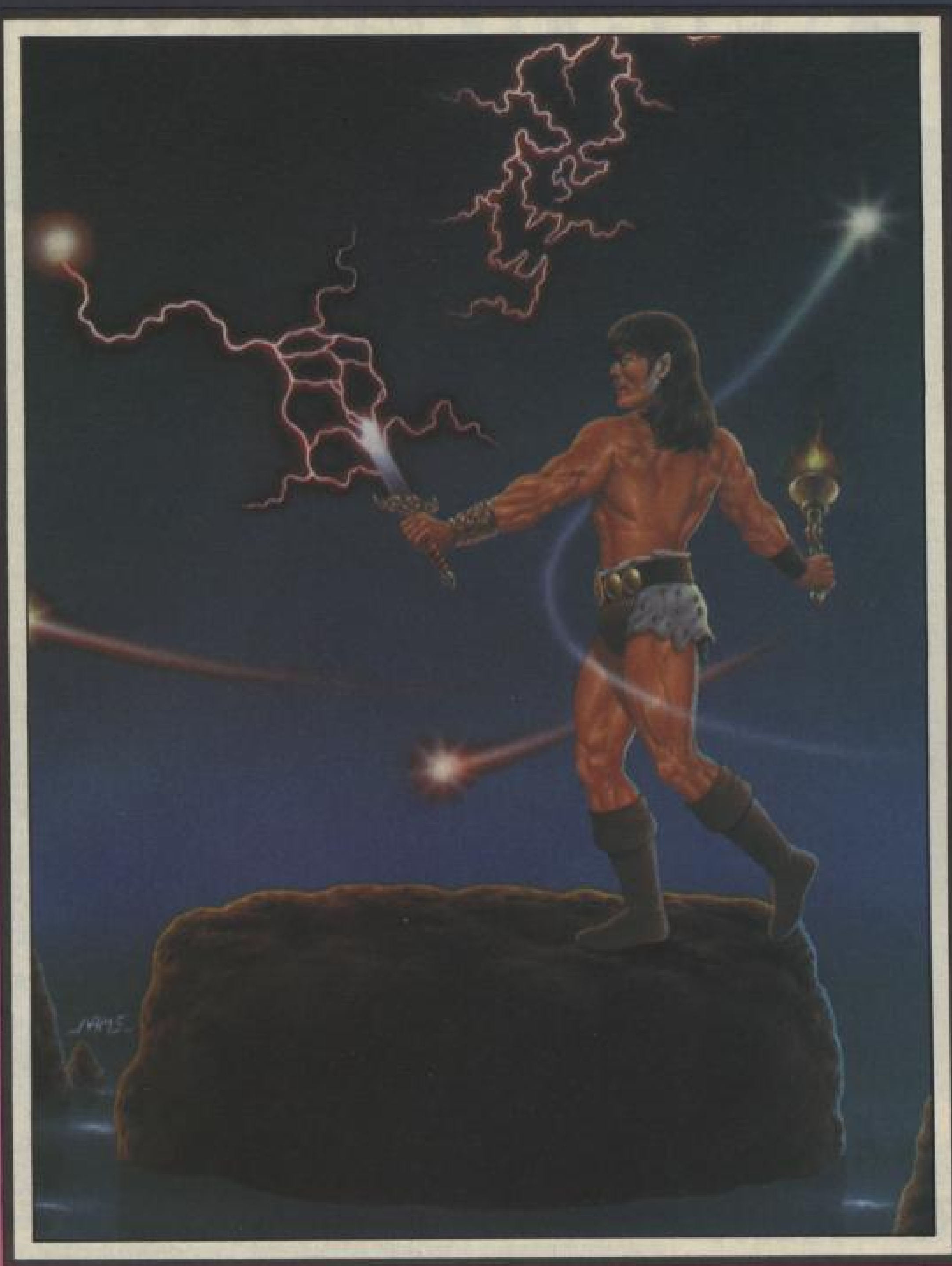
PENTAGRAM and CYBERUN are available for the Spectrum 48k and Amstrad from selected branches of W.H. Smith, Boots, John Menzies, Woolworths and all good software stores. They are also available from Ultimate Play the Game, The Green, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5JU. (Postage and packing included.)

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PENTAGRAM

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INFOGRAMES

NINJA MASTER

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Tron Software**

If you've ever wondered how Ninjas become Ninjas then playing this game might give you the answer you've been searching for. Apparently it's all sorted out in a kind of Ninja Olympic Games. After many months of preparation, learning various skills from your Hanshi, it is time to compete in the great contest that decides whether you deserve to hold the title Ninja Master after all.

The game contains four levels, and you are called upon to demonstrate a different oriental skill in each one. The first section is set in front of snow capped mountains. Deadly pointed arrows are shot at you from random directions and they have to be deflected away from your body. Four movements are involved: kicks and punches to both the left and right. Intercepting arrows wins points and a score of over 1500 is needed to progress on to the next level. When an arrow lands on the Ninja's body he utters a blood-curdling yell, but a successful deflection is greeted with a war cry.

The second part of the contest takes place in indoor arena where a sturdy piece of wood has to be karate chopped in two. You have twenty seconds to build up your strength by pounding away at the keyboard, trying to move the status arrow as far along the strength chart as possible. After twenty seconds the Ninja automatically lets fly with his fist and tries to cut the block in two. Three attempts are allowed on this stage, and at least one bit of wood has to be broken to qualify for the third round. A successful performance is rewarded by enthusiastic applause from the Japanese audience.

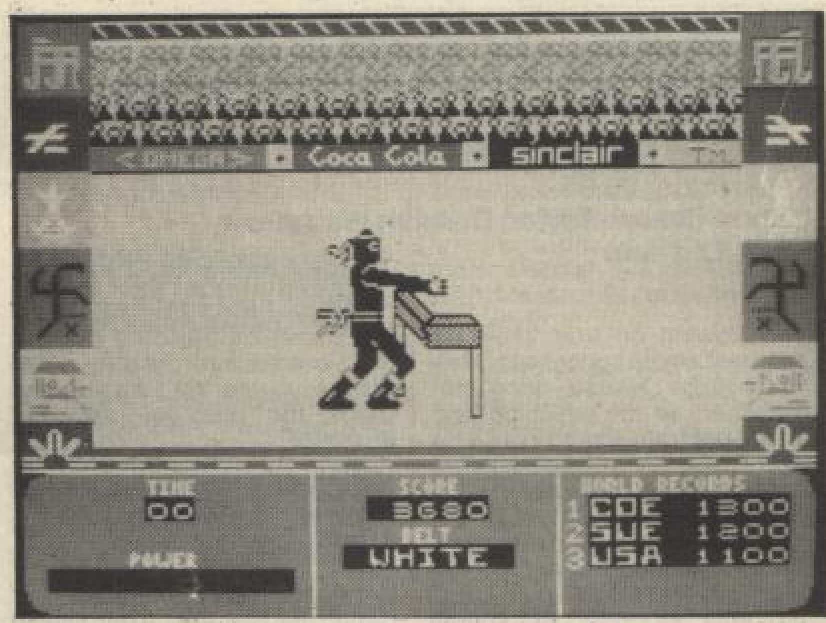
The third level of the tournament has a slightly cosmopolitan feel to it — the action takes place on the banks of the Nile, in the shadow of the Great Pyramids. Equipped with a pointy stick, the Ninja has to fend off Shunken Stars. The stars are fired randomly and at great speed, and your Ninja must stop them from embedding themselves in his body by blocking them with his stick. Again, three attempts are offered and a qualifying score of 1200 pints is needed before you can continue.

Ninjadom is just around the corner if you get to the last section. Canisters thrown from the right of the screen have to be shot down with a blowpipe. The backdrop is back to a more traditional Japanese style with a huge red moon hanging in the night sky and snow lying on the ground. When the required score has been achieved you graduate to a yellow belt. From here onwards the game cycles round again, except the qualifying scores are much higher.

CRITICISM

● **" Gosh, an original idea for a sports simulation. It's been a while since a joystick waggling game ventured onto the humble Spectrum; I must say that it is quite good as well. The graphics are fairly good although not outstanding: your character is a little jerky, but he doesn't move into any unrealistic positions. The sound isn't excellent but the screams are good! As for playability, well it's quite good fun for your first few goes but its appeal diminishes a little after you've completed your first set of four screens. "**

● *" Not exactly a new idea, but at the budget price it's a new venture, and I'm sure there'll be a few takers. The graphics are very similar to that of* Sai Combat *and the whole game is more of a bash and smash* Hyper Sports. *The sound is very realistic and it includes a good use of 'eegh!' and 'aghh!' speech effects. I wouldn't say there is anything terribly original in it, but I found the game very compelling to play. Firebird have released it at the right price, and it would give you good value for money. But if you've got a fight game then forget it. "*



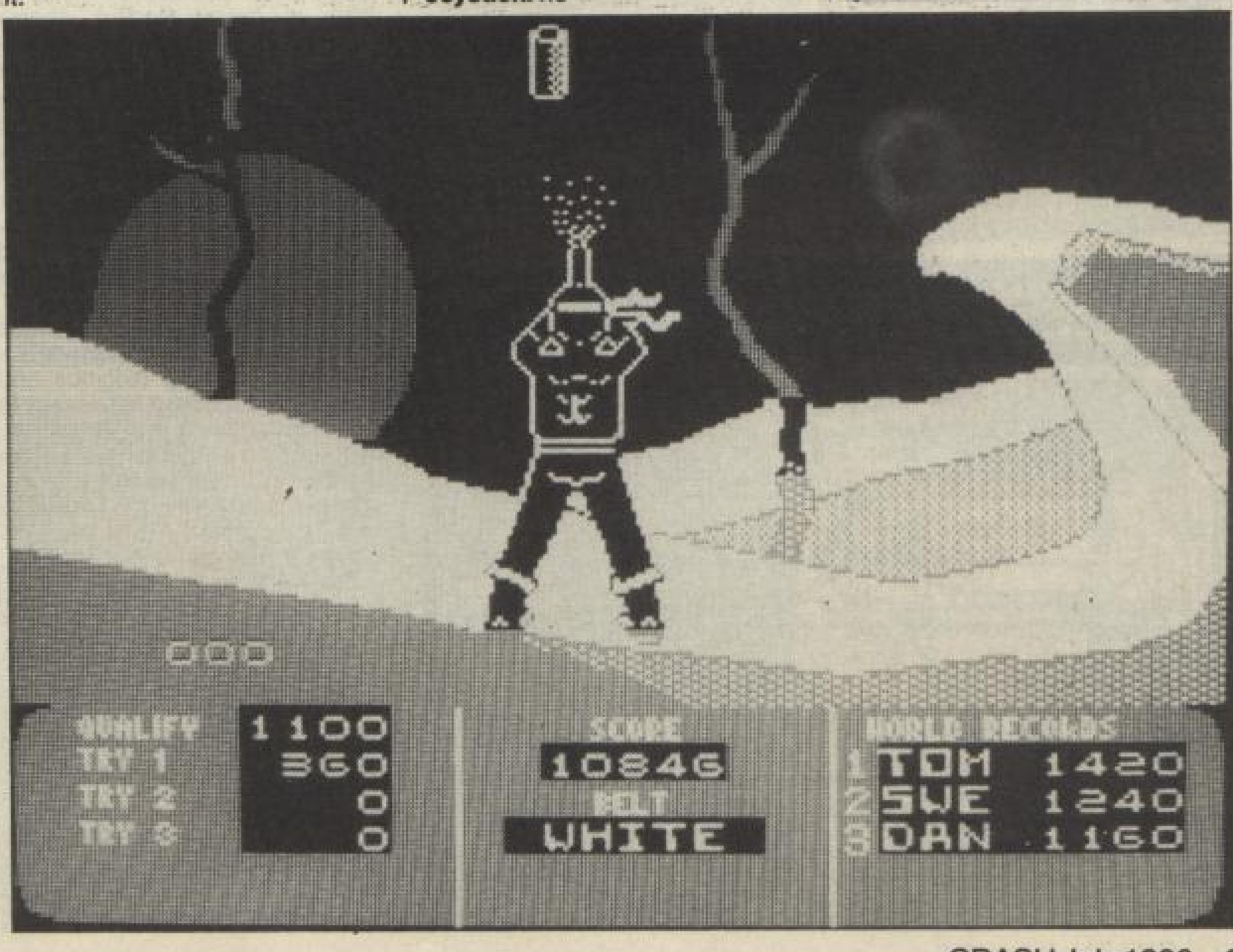
A contemporary arena for Ninja Block Breaking — spot the SINCLAIR advert on the hoarding!

● " Not another label relaunch Firebird! Oh well, though it hasn't got amazing graphics, *Ninja Master* itself is quite fun. The sound, if the frenzied cries of a pained Ninja can be defined as sound, is quite realistic as far as the limitations of the Spectrum will allow. I didn't play it for all that long, but for £1.99, it should provide a few hours entertainment, I suppose. I wouldn't buy it, but then there are those who like this sort of thing, and it might well appeal to them. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable, multiple moves
Joystick: no
Keyboard play: a bit tricky
Use of colour: fine
Graphics: quite well animated, pretty backdrops
Sound: nice title tune and screeches
Skill levels: one
Screens: 4
General rating: A different kind of sports simulation that's should prove quite appealing

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	63%
Playability	60%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	63%
Value for money	72%
Overall	**64%**



ROCK'N WRESTLE

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Steven Taylor, Damian Watharow, Frank Oldham**

Following on from previous beat em up successes, **Melbourne House** bring the excitement of the wrestling ring to the Spectrum screen in a game which can be played against computerised opponents or head-to-head with a friend.

In the one player game, you control Gorgeous Greg who is going for the World Championship. Four opponents stand between Greg and the champion's belt, and he must defeat them all twice on the route to the top. The fighters Greg faces in the ring each have a unique personality and temperament and their fighting styles vary accordingly. Lord Toff, for instance, takes the scientific approach to wrestling and knows all of the twenty three moves available in the game. Vicious Vivian is a mohicanned yob who learnt to fight on the streets, while the Missouri Breaker fights mean and dirty. Redneck McCoy is apparently an affable yokel, but when he's in the ring he becomes one mean opponent, yessiree.

Each bout on the way to the championship lasts three minutes and to win, Greg has to pin his opponent to the canvas for a count of three seconds. In the two player mode the winner is the first to get two pinfalls. The two wrestlers each have a status bar displayed at the edge of the screen, and as they take falls or weakeners — forearm smashes, knee jerks and kicks — their stamina levels fall. Before going for the pinfall, it's wise to soften your opponent up.

The final bout, which can leave Greg Champion of the World, has no time limit — it's a fight to the death almost. The only thing that's missing from the game is the overexcited granny who rushes up the the ringside and prods the bad guy with her umbrella!

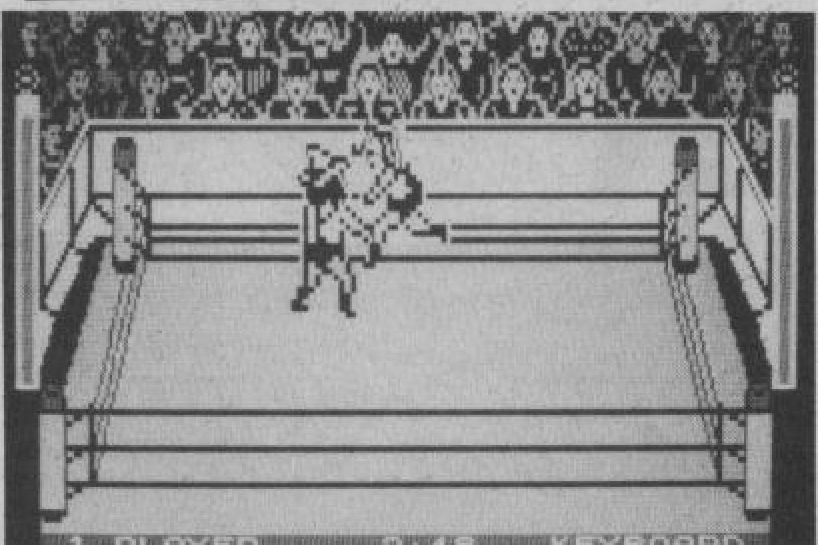
CRITICISM

●" Rock and Wrestle **is definitely not a worthy follow up to the other Melbourne House hits. The graphics are very poor and the sound could have been pinched from the great** Fist. **Even if you're a bit of a grappling fan, you are unlikely to be impressed by the way your opponent can bash you to the floor and then jump on you after a pause — NOT all part of the same move. Where's the ref, eh? I'm glad Melbourne House have finally put in a decent background in the Spectrum game, but the crowd do seem very bored with the whole affair. The graphics are very podgy and a bit like Axil from** Heavy On The Magic **which poses a few problems in a combat game. Seeing your man when he's in a crucial clinch can get difficult. I warn you, the graphics may look nice but the game's very low on playability. There's no 'Rock', either. "**

●" *OK Melbourne, where's the Rock, eh? Come to that, where's the game?* Fist *is definitely one of the all time fighting classics, so why couldn't Melbourne come up with a wrestling game that is just as good? The sound is taken from* Fist, *but where's the 'complete rock sound track' mentioned in the adverts? Colour is lavishly used, but the graphics are chunky, badly defined, and generally messily done. The controls are quite slow to respond, which makes the game even more difficult, to the point of making it frustratingly unaddictive. No, though I don't like to slag off a company which has produced such classics in the past, I think* Rock 'N Wrestle *is a complete foul up.* "

●" I can say without fear of being beaten up by my fellow reviewers that this game is appalling: there isn't a single thing about it that stands out or is interesting. The graphics are poor, so poor in fact that at times it is very difficult to follow the action on screen; the characters are undetailed and move around the screen very badly. The sound is about the best thing going for this one — there isn't a tune but there are some nice meaty spot effects when you mince your opponent. It looks like there were some problems with this game that weren't discovered until it was too late . . . "

Whee! Gorgeous Greg flies through the air at the hands of Redneck. Cameron reckons that wrestling is a mug's game, but then he prefers wrestling with mugs. Tea Mugs.



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: a bit tricky, slow response
Use of colour: 'transparent' wrestlers, pretty ring
Graphics: rather confusing at times
Sound: no Rock! Spot effects only
Skill levels: one
Screens: four wrestlers to beat
General rating: A disappointing development from the Masters of the Beat Em Up

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	54%
Playability	43%
Getting started	55%
Addictive qualities	46%
Value for money	46%
Overall	**48%**

THE MASTER

Producer: ANTARTIC
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **David McGee**

The moral of this tale is a simple one. Never fall asleep in the cinema after a hard day's graft, especially if the film you are watching happens to be about fearsome fanged monsters and long legged beasties. If you do you may never wake up . . .

After a day's digging, there's nothing Jasper the gravedigger enjoys more than a scary film. One evening while, watching *The Dream of a Thousand Vampires*, he drifts off into an uncomfortable sleep and has a curious dream. Somehow he has been transported into the film he was watching and has taken over the starring role. Now it is up to him to defeat the Vampire Master.

Vampires are pretty indestructable creatures. Their one weakness is a dislike of anything religious and the sight of a Cross is enough to get them shaking in their coffins. Jasper must collect as many crosses as he can if he is to stand any chance of defeating the Master of evil. The Master is not the only danger in the game. Each screen is filled with an array of monsters, from scuttling spiders to slithering snakes. Jasper loses a life every time he touches a monster — at least he has nine lives in his dream!

The locations are booby trapped — ten ton weights drop from the ceiling to squash Jasper, and false floors send him crashing to his death on the ground below. Each screen must be cleared of crosses before Jasper can move on the next one. Careful timing is essential as some of the crosses turn into blazing effigies of evil and if Jasper tries to collect a firey cross he looses a life.

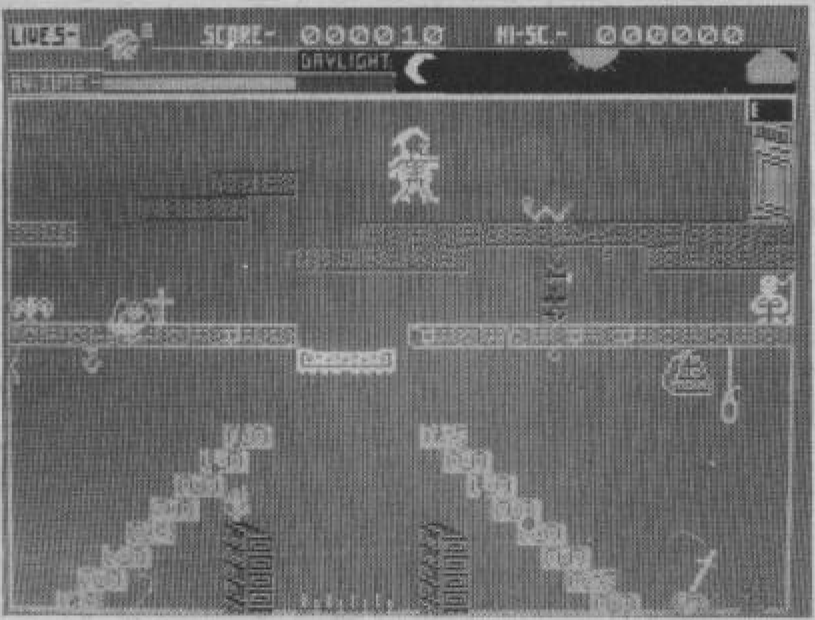
Before the final confrontation, Jasper has to work his way through a range of strange locations — from his Club to The Sinking of the SS Titantic. The Master must be confronted five times before he is destroyed, and takes on a different character each time round the game.

A status area at the top of the screen indicates Jasper' progress, and as the sun gradually sets and the new moon rises you know that time is running out for the little Gravedigger. This'll be the last time he watches any late horror movies for a long while. . . .

CRITICISM

● " **This game is absolutely appalling. The graphics are very bad and slowly animated, and game is nigh on impossible to play. The instructions at the beginning use a re-defined character set which is very hard to read even on the most well tuned T.V. and the music is very dreary.** The Master **looks like a very poor copy of** Chiller **which was pretty terrible anyway. I really couldn't see any good points to the game — stick to the T.V. series. "**

● "*Nothing about this game appeals to me. It is so infuriating that after only one go I'd had enough. Lack of speed and poor control are the two things which really bring it down. The graphics are not what*



Jasper — the skeletal figure at the top of the screen — negotiates another set of fiendish traps and tries to avoid the nasties on the way to vanquish THE MASTER

I'd call good, but they are adequate; the characters flicker slightly and none of them are really detailed; the backgrounds are a little over-coloured but there is very little colour clash. The sound is poor — if you listen carefully you may hear a spot effect during the game and there is a tunette on the title screen. Generally I wouldn't recommend this one as it offers almost no playablity or addictive qualities. "

● " What can I say? Nothing even vaguely complimentary, that's for sure. *The Master* is one of those awful games that really annoy me, because it's been so badly written. The graphics are grotty, the collision detection inaccurate, and the music on the title screen: arggghh! *The Master* very definitely looks as if it has been rushed, as a few more alterations could have got Artic a nice game. As it is though . . . Ugh!

COMMENTS

Control keys: X left, C right, top row to fire, 2nd row to jump, ENTER to start
Joystick: Kempston, AGF
Keyboard play: adequate
Use of colour: bright
Graphics: crude; poorly animated
Sound: dreary title tune and tiny spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 9
General rating: The low price doesn't make up for the poor game

Use of computer	34%
Graphics	39%
Playability	26%
Getting started	49%
Addictive qualities	23%
Value for money	27%
Overall	30%

KIDNAP

Producer: Sparklers
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Trik**

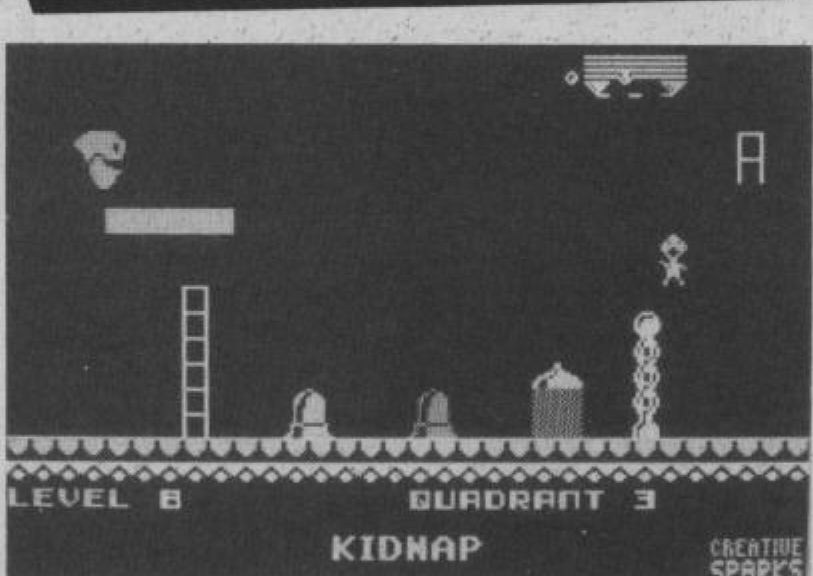
Oh lawdy, lawdy! The evil and villainous Krudd, a malignant and nasty race of an evil sort, have decided that the latest thing in badness is to swipe away large amounts of the Earth's baby population! Once the infants are swiped, the naughty aliens transport them back to the planet Krudd where the unsuspecting cherubs are quick frozen into suspended animation.

The Krudds plan to sell off the babes as popsicles to the baby-eating Vlurgs From Behind The Moon. Well, a hero is needed and you are that very hero, a wobbling fat blob with a predeliction to walking sideways.

Transported into the alien's baby holding warehouse, you must waddle round, collecting babies and saving them from the gory fate lurking just around the corner. Babies are returned home by placing them into the Magic Pram, a mystical object from the planet Muvirkare that teleports any children placed within it back home. For every four babies collected and teleported, a burst of pleasure surges through you, resulting in an extra life — quite handy, considering the amount of lives that you'll lose facing the Krudd babyguards.

The format of *Kidnap* is extremely similar to a lot of other games — in short it's an arcade adventure in classic *Jet Set Willy* style. You can go left, right and jump and babies are collected by travelling over them. Around the gaff are a number of deadly nasties all of which must be avoided: their touch is deadly. As with most games of this type, guiding the fatty under your hypnotic control off the screen causes another screen to splash into view. To complete the game, all of earth's thirty two frozen babies have to be magic prammed back to their snug little cots back home.

Poor old cold baby. The Blob has just been killed and there's little hope of rescue now . . .



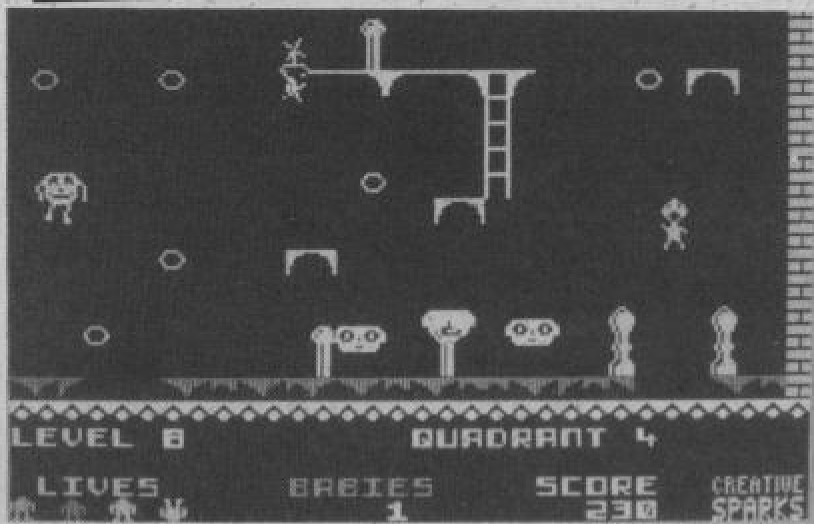
CRITICISM

● **" Aargh! Not another** Manic Miner **copy from a budget label — and I thought Creative Sparks had pulled their act together with** Snodgits **— it seems not. The game is an obvious copy of hundreds of other platform games — it even has** Manic Miner **type music. The graphics are small and boring, and the colour is typical of the old arcade adventures with lots of attribute clashes and very inaccurate error detection. I didn't find anything that would keep me playing** Kidnap **for long: it's a very crude copy of better games of this type. "**

● *" A platform game: gosh I haven't seen one of these in ages, aren't they rare! The game is based around a fairly novel idea, but alas it feels just like another* Jet Set Willy *rip off. The graphics are pretty much run-of-the-mill for this type of game; fairly smooth animation, a few nicely drawn characters and lots of garish colours. The sound is fair but nothing special; just a tune and the odd spot effect here and there. Despite this game's many primitive aspects, I quite enjoyed it for a while. "*

● "What a pleasant little game, saving frozen babies. As a *Jet Set Willy* clone goes, *Kidnap* isn't that bad really: it performs all its tasks competently and smoothly and is hard to flaw. Gameplaywise though, the market really has seen too many of this type of game. I am sick and tired of finding that so many of the budget games received by CRASH are heavily inspired by *JSW*. That program really has haunted budding programmers the country over, supposedly all of them wishing to be Matthew Smith The Second. I wish they'd go away and do something original and stop turning out stuff like this "

You are the large blob with arms and legs on the left of the screen, while a poor little baby hangs, frozen stiff on the right. Can you make it over there?



COMMENTS

Control keys: A-G pause, Q-T continue, P/O music on/off, Z-V left, B-SYM SHIFT right, CAP SHIFT/SPACE jump
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: bright, little clash
Graphics: unoriginal approach, fairly tidy
Sound: *Manic Miner* type ditty
Skill levels: one
Screens: 32
General rating: A dated format with a new scenario; fairly well done

Use of computer	50%
Graphics	52%
Playability	48%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	47%
Overall	49%

SARLMOOR

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Colin Jones**

The eternal struggle of good against evil, the goodies vs the baddies — this is *Sarlmoor*, another binary game of binary morality. As ever, you play the goodie, battling against the nasty and evil Vard, a race that for aeons has inbreed natural nastiness. The Vard have managed to master a horrid form of biological power that allows them to keep all the creatures on a planet on the brink of death. The Vard are using their Biological Field Generator to sap the energy of the beings on planet Zorr, a peaceful and benign race. You are *Sarlmoor*, after witnessing such despicable behaviour you decide to sort the Vard out and teach them a lesson they won't forget.

First of all you come into orbit, and from a high vantage point must clear a safe place to teleport to. The first stage is completed by zapping a number of nasties from a great height. Controlling your saucer, left and right, you have to zap baddies as they travel along the ground below you. Zaps appear in the form of cosmic shreddies that zoom down to the planet but should they hit any of shreddie absorbing clouds they don't reach the ground. Your death-dealing shreddies mustn't hit the pleasant little lizard creatures either, as they're the fellers you must defend. Blotting these guys out with electrified breakfast will result in one life less for *Sarlmoor*.

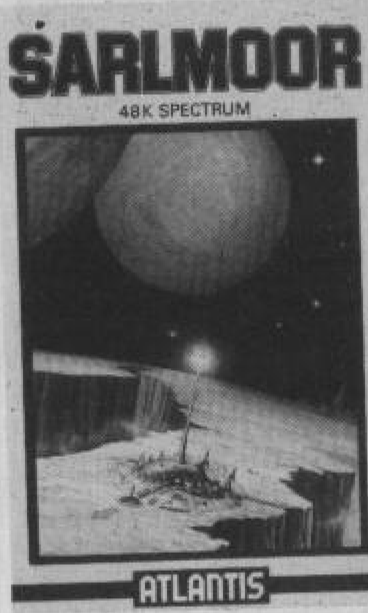
After this stage has been completed, the action moves to an underground cavern full of nasties to be avoided. When your potholing activities have been completed, the Vards' Biological Field Generator is within your range and has to be destroyed. After that, all that remains is for the Vards' captives to be freed and the game is complete.

CRITICISM

● **" I've seen better games than** Sarlmoor. **The graphics are pretty BASIC stuff, but some of the effects on the title screens are quite nice. It's a bit playable, and addictive for a few minutes, but not really long enough to justify spending £1.99. All the stages are reasonable arcade games, but there's nothing particularly astounding about any of it. Simple, easy, and a bit boring seems to sum it up. "**

● *" I'm not impressed: gameplay is slow, unresponsive and uninteresting. The instructions are a little unhelpful, although they suffice. Your man or ship isn't very responsive to the controls and some practice is needed before you get the hang of it. The graphics would have been about average the year before last — the characters are short on detail, but move rather neatly. The sound effects are poor: merely a beep every now and then. After a few goes the game became monotonous and tiresome to play, so even with its cheapo price tag I wouldn't really recommend it. "*

● " I can't say I've got much time for games like this. Just because Atlantis are publishing cheapo games, do they think they can get away with bad games? It's not on. *Sarlmoor* is a very boring shoot em down which looks as if it was



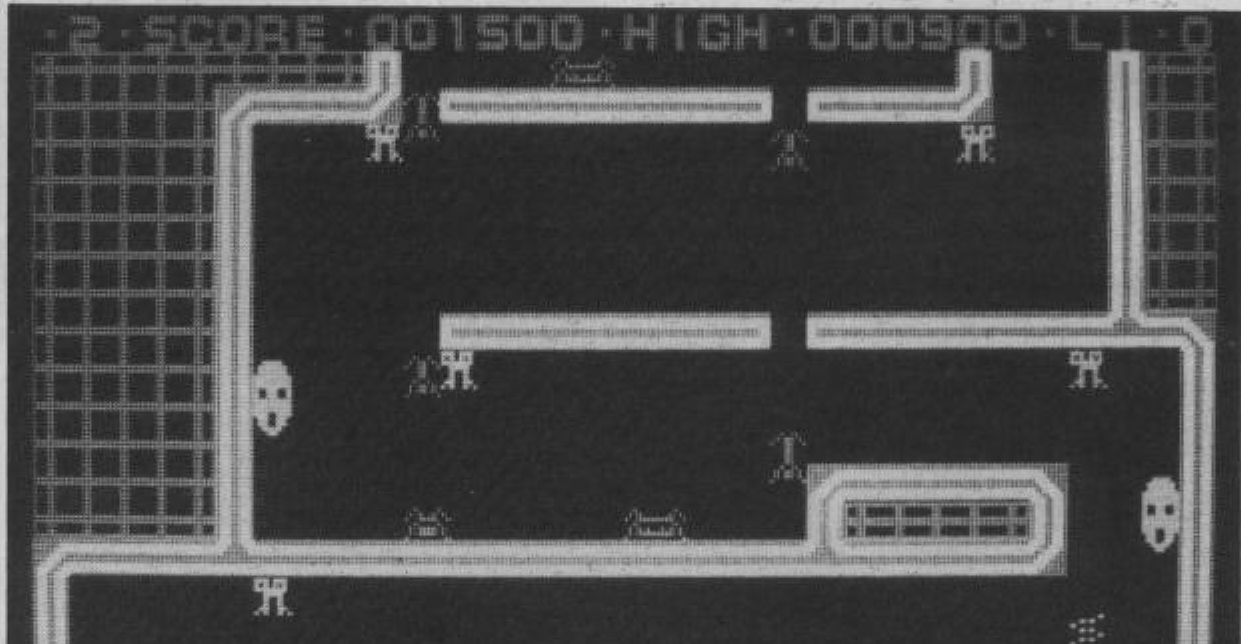
based on some of the very first Atari console games, yet it's a lot worse. It contains a second part which could have been taken out of *Halls of the Things*, but again, it's a lot worse. Accuracy of character collision is appalling and I found I could be a long way away from the enemy and it would still kill me. I wouldn't recommend this game to someone I hated — I mean, I'm not that cruel. Please avoid this kind of software and don't encourage it . . . "

COMMENTS

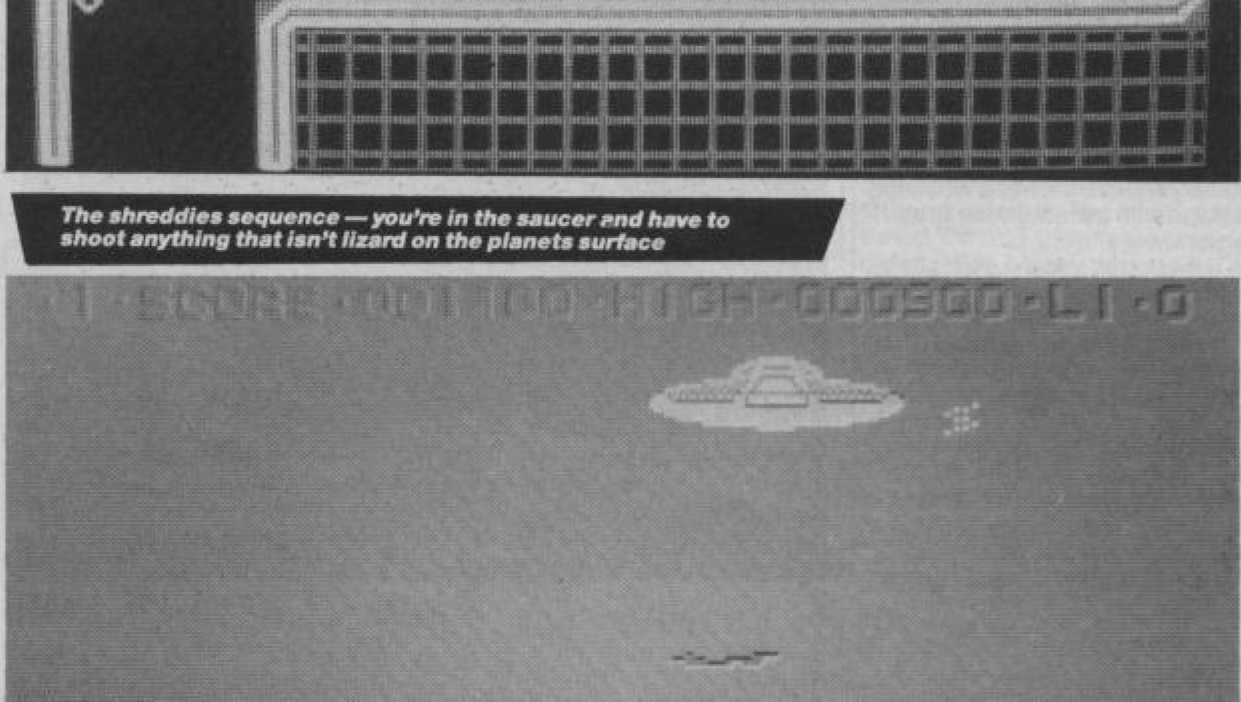
Control keys: A, S left, D, F, G right, Y-P up, H- L down, bottom row fire, 1 pause/restart
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: nothing special
Graphics: nice animation let down by the designs
Sound: minimal
Skill levels: one
Screens: 4
General rating: Outdated — might have been passable a couple of years ago

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	45%
Playability	35%
Getting started	44%
Addictive qualities	36%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**38%**

The cave sequence — SARLMOOR is the winged creature to the right of the screen



The shreddies sequence — you're in the saucer and have to shoot anything that isn't lizard on the planets surface



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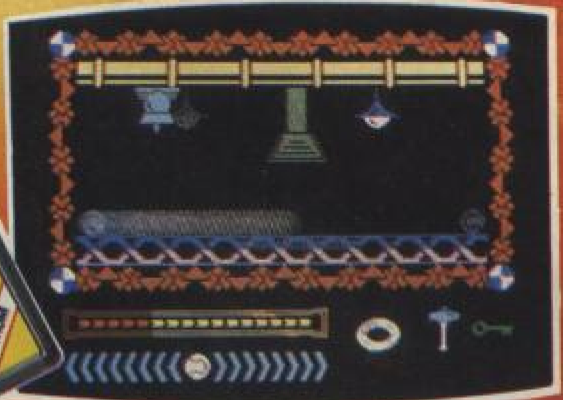
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ACTION REFLEX

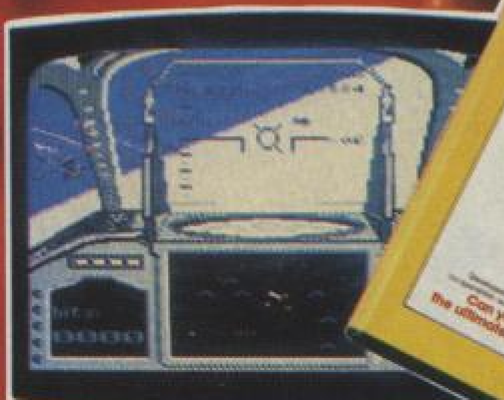
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G·H·O·S·T·S A·N·D G·O·B·L·I·N·S



Producer: Elite Systems
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Keith Burkhill**

A brave knight is just about to propose to his dusky-eyed maiden when out of a dark sky swoops a huge salivating demon. Before the knight can so much as re-buckle his armour, the horrible monster seizes the knight's beloved and sweeps her off to its foul lair.

Thankfully the scene of this Capcom arcade conversion is set in days of old when knights were bold, so the love-lorn hero sets out on a quest, a quest to rescue his damsel. Scampering across a scrolling landscape, he must make his way to the demon king's murky lair. Our hero really has his work cut out for him — the path to the demon king's abode is filled with nasties who are all determined to end the knight's mission of mercy prematurely. To make things even more tricky, each section of the game has to be completed within a time limit.

The knight starts out, resplendent in shiny armour as he scuttles towards the demon king's lair and a romantic reunion. Contact with the monsters in the game results in the knight losing something vital. After his first encounter with a nasty, he is so shocked that his tin suit falls off and he is left scampering around in his undies. Following the second clash he loses a life and his skeleton crumples to the ground. The knight is provided with nine lives, and each time a life is lost he is returned to the start of the current segment of the game.

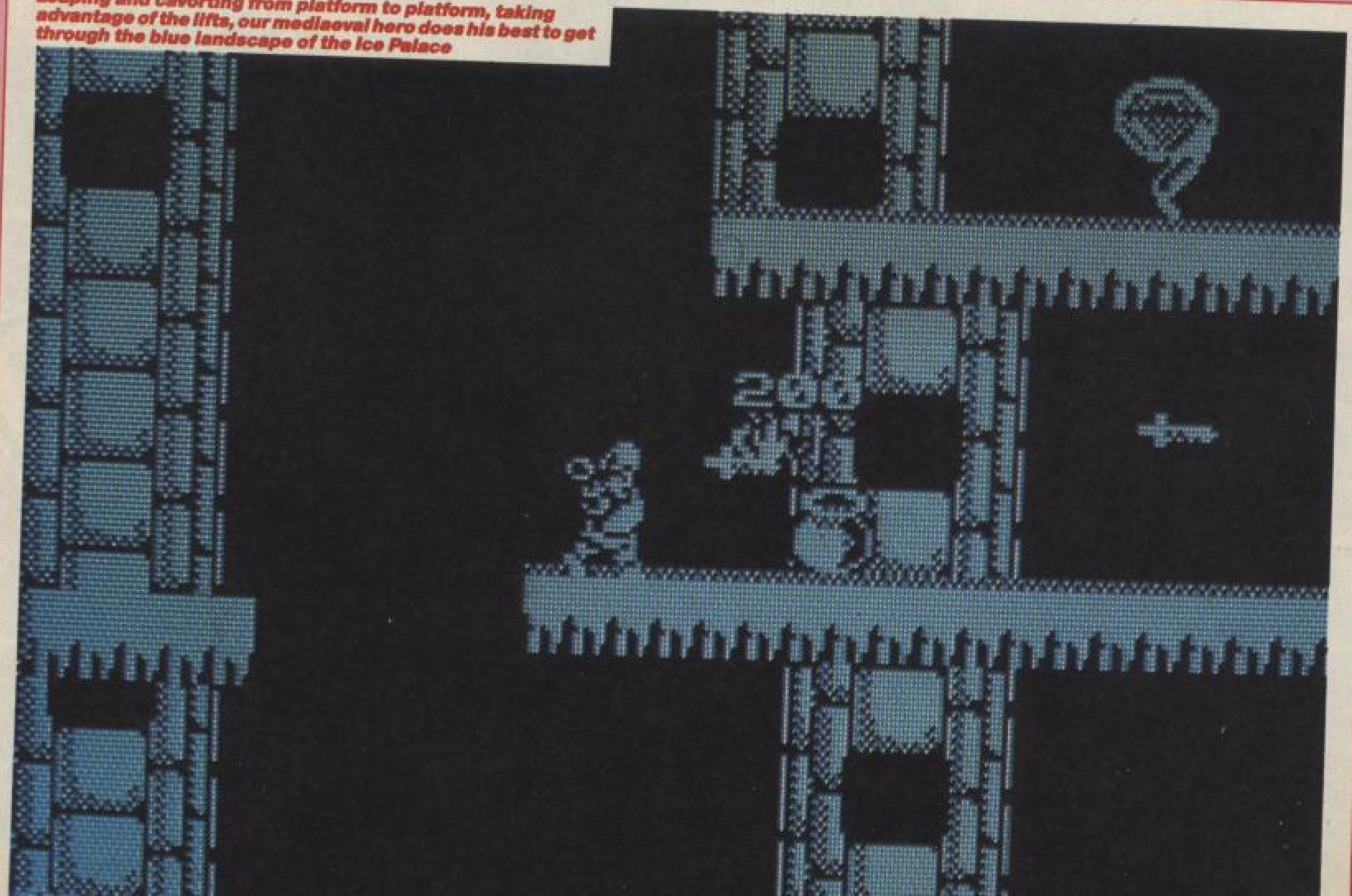
In the first zone, the gallant knight battles through a graveyard filled with zombies crawling out of the tombs, arms out-stretched to meet him. Unfortunately they're not going to give our hero a sloppy kiss on the cheek. Killing him is more what they have in mind. Apart from the zombies patrolling around the graveyard a number of other nasty creatures hinder his progress. Kamikazi owls swoop down from great heights, and carnivorous plants shoot gobs of acidic digestive juice at the chivalrous crusader.

The knight is not totally defenceless. At the start of the game he is provided with a weapon. This can either be a lance, a sword or a magic fireball — all activated by a press of the fire button. Some weapons are more effective than others: the fire bombs are lobbed

CRITICISM

" Elite have come up with another arcade winner. Ghosts and Goblins **is a genuine first rate copy of the arcade game. The thing that amazes me most about this game is the beautifully smooth scrolling — its strongest point and one that makes it amazingly playable. The graphics are very similar to those of** Green Beret, **and the problem of losing your man when he's against a bit of background in the same colour is here too.** Ghosts and Goblins **still contains the addictiveness of the arcade game and the graphics are an almost perfect copy — bar colour of course. The only bad bit about it was the presentation which is limited to a very basic scoreboard and no sound to shout about. This is due to memory restrictions so I was told. Despite this, Elite have come up with another arcade classic. "**

Leaping and cavorting from platform to platform, taking advantage of the lifts, our mediaeval hero does his best to get through the blue landscape of the Ice Palace





Stumpy, stumpy stumpy. That Demon chappie looks well 'ard. Can our hero land enough blows to do the baddie in and progress to the next level? Come on Cam, jiggle that joystick

CRITICISM

" Yippee!.. What a game! It's so compelling I have to fight through the Zzap reviewers to get a game in! Although the conversion only contains three levels (the original was massive) there's more than enough to keep you busy. Graphically, Ghosts and Goblins **is certainly very good if not excellent: your man leaps around, runs and crouches — all nicely animated and very smoothly at that. The sound leaves a lot to be desired. I was terribly disappointed that there wasn't a larger vocabulary of sound. This game is very good. It is compelling beyond belief and well worth the money. My only gripe is that it is let down a little by the boring front end and unoriginal Spectrum character set. Minor moans, though . . . "**

into the air and careful timing is needed to dispose of nasties, while the fire button sends out a stream of daggers at gizzard height if the hero is equipped with the little knife. Points are collected for each nasty killed. Some of the Demon King's minions carry weapons, and when they are killed the knight's weapon changes automatically — care is needed if you are to avoid being lumbered with a weapon you don't want.

Once the knight has managed to get through the perils in the graveyard, there's a rather large overweight demon to destroy. The larger characters in the game take several hits before they are killed. Once the demon is dead, the knight has to cross a lethal lake by using a raft. With or without his armour, the knight sinks without a trace into the lake's murky depths if he misjudges the leap. Swimming is apparently not a skill taught on chivalry courses . . .

Through a dark wood, avoiding more diving owls and witch creatures, and it's time for a show down with an ogre, affectionately called Fatty Stomper by his friends. When the knight manages to blast him into little puffs of oxygen and ozone he gains the key to the Ice Palace and a new suit of armour if he happens to be in his undies at the time. This section of the game is played on a backdrop which scrolls in four directions, and the knight must leap from platform to platform killing evil goblins that look rather like winged teddy bears. They are far from cuddly, swooping down from great heights with murder on their minds. Fireball-spitting veggies also inhabit the Ice Palace, and bonus points can be collected by nabbing priceless treasures carried by some of the evil creatures. Mistiming a leap can be fatal — the Ice Palace is build above water, and knights can't swim . . .

CRITICISM

" I saw the arcade game all of a year ago and was predictably impressed. When I read that Elite were to convert the game it caused much amusement, as we dismissed the deal as triumph of marketing over the possible. Well, Keith Burkhill has proved my intuition well and truly and completely wrong and has gone and produced an excellent interpretation of the arcade original equipped with perfectly smooth scrolling and all the gamey bits that made the original Ghosts and Goblins **so much fun to chuck ten pee bits into. Though a little bit hard at first it shouldn't take long to get yourself into the Ice Castle, battling off the fatal advances of flying killer teddy bears. All in all a really outstanding release from Elite despite the rubbish advert (you know the one drawn in crayon by a juvenile) and represents unusual value for money. "**

After the Ice Palace comes a ghost town, populated with all manner of weird and wonderful monsters that swoop out of shuttered windows and chase the questing knight. After the town the hero has to negotiate a platforms and ladders section — the Monsters' Den populated by by large and hardy demons that only die after a handful of hits.

A double dose of guardian demon has to be overcome at the end of the Den before access is gained to the final section of the game — the Cavern System. The mission is nearly over. Mr Knight's beloved is within sight. Unfortunately, she is being guarded by a rather large Chinese dragon who doesn't look very friendly at all. The knight is rather tired after his long and perilous journey. If he makes one last supreme effort, then his bride to be will be his for evermore and he can carry her over the threshold in true romantic style as befits a knight of the realm. Even if he is only wearing underpants.

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: your character can blend into the background, but neatly done nevertheless
Graphics: good animation; faithful to the original within the Spectrum's limitations
Sound: more of it would have gone down well
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling playing area
General rating: Yet another very competent Capcom conversion from Elite. Very playable and addictive

Use of computer	89%
Graphics	92%
Playability	95%
Getting started	91%
Addictive qualities	96%
Value for money	93%
Overall	95%

THE PLANETS

Producer: Martech
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **John Wilson, Ian McArdle, Jason Austin. Graphics by Malcolm Smith**

Natural disasters have devastated the planet Earth and the human race is in danger — but a missive from an alien race may point the way to salvation. A metal canister hurtles through the void of space with a secret computer code inside it. When the program tape it contains is loaded into an Earth computer, a complex game is revealed — but there are no instructions.

It becomes clear that other capsules have been deposited on each of the nine planets in the Solar System, and your mission is to pilot a solo craft, find these capsules and unlock their secrets. First your lander must be sent to Earth to collect the canister there and a long-range map of the solar system so that your mission can begin.

The main game is controlled from the cockpit of a Type 224 Explorer craft. Messages from Control scroll across the top of the main viewscreen, round which icons are grouped. These allow you to manipulate the lander, explore the planets you visit, travel through the depths of space, and access computerised mapping and database systems. At the bottom of the screen is a chart showing the time and the star-date. Underneath this is a panel showing what your next destination is and how long it will take to get there.

A tractor beam controls the lander automatically during descent and ascent above a height of 10 kilometers from the surface. The lander is affected by the gravitational pull of the planet which it is attempting to land on or leave, and manual manipulation of the boosters is vital to ensure a safe journey. A limited quantity of fuel is available, and if too much energy is expended during the landing you'll be stuck planetside for the rest of your days.

During travel between planets, various hazards including space debris in the form of meteorites is encountered and to avoid damage to the ship, an arcade sequence involving some nifty application of the on board lasers has to be played through.

Once the lander has arrived on a planet's surface safely it's time to find the alien capsule and attempt to open it. A robot explorer is available for short range sorties, and once the capsule has been located a lock system has to be cracked before it reveals another part of the alien puzzle.

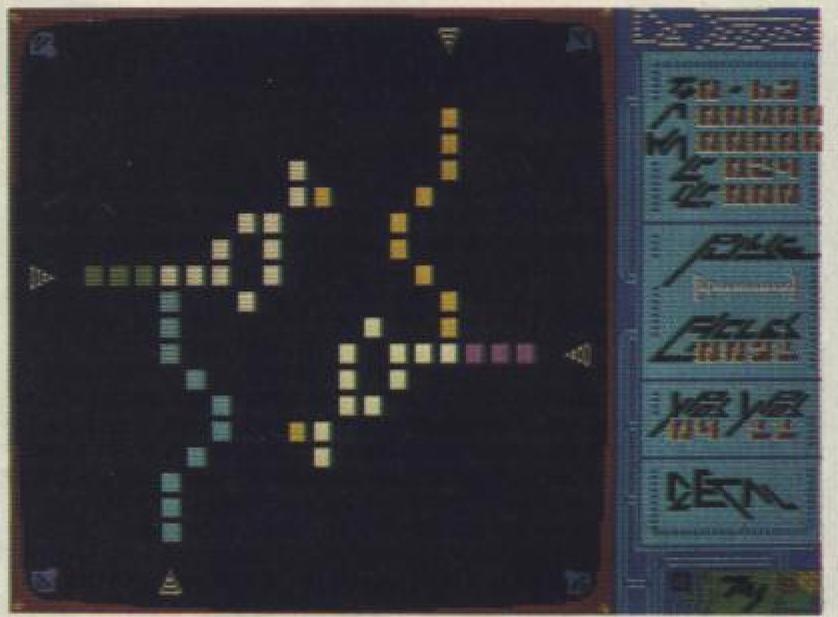
Each of the codes yielded by the capsule help to solve the ultimate puzzle set by the aliens — and playing the strange alien game is likely to assist in cracking the problem. Martech hint that the Solar System itself is a clue — and promise a prize to the first person to contact them after completing the game. Get with it . . .

CRITICISM

● **"Zoids is easily one of the best games on the Spectrum, and Martech's latest release, The Planets, is quite an admirable attempt, though I don't think it's as good as Zoids. The graphics are quite nice, though they are far better in some parts than in others, and the sound during play is a bit boring, though the title tune is a masterpiece. I found the game very hard to get into, but it was well worth the effort. The instructions could have been far better, as they go little further than explaining the function of the icons and basic gameplay. Getting down to the planets is both difficult and frustrating, as not only do you have to leave enough fuel in reserve for the journey back up, but you have to keep a very careful eye on your speed, and it can get quite tough at times. Really, I have played better games, though I think Martech have polished this one to its limits and come up with a very respectable game."**

● "The Planets *is one of those games which you can't just jump into aimlessly. It requires a thorough read of the instructions, and patience in introducing yourself to the techniques of the game. The game can be either very involving or frustrating if it suddenly ends as the result of a mis-placed twitch of the finger. Landing the craft is a very tricky procedure and requires excellent hand/eye co-ordination. Once you've landed you can really get going! The graphics are very good on the planets and good use of colour has been made throughout the whole of the game.* The Planets *is a very involving game which deserves a good look at from arcade players who like to dabble in the strategy side of things now and again.*"

● "This is a very large game indeed. Not only do you get a separate little alien game, *Weird*, but the Solar System has to be loaded in in three chunks — all the data won't fit into 48K. (128 owners get the whole lot in one long load.) There's plenty of accurate information about the Solar System contained in the game, thanks to the advice and assistance Heather Couper the astronomer gave Martech, and you're bound to come away with something of an education when you play *The Planets*. Overall, it is a nice blend of arcade and strategy/puzzle sequences and should keep most gamesters well and truly busy for quite a while. Worth checking out."



The delightful vista that greets you on the viewscreen when the Lander has arrived back home on planet Earth



COMMENTS

Control keys: Lander and weapon controls: N left, M right, A forwards, Z backwards, SPACE vertical; lock controls: N select position, A turn combination, SPACE to try opening capsule
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: without problems
Use of colour: some very attractive sequences
Graphics: very good
Sound: great title tune plus spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: main console with viewscreen
General rating: A large and complex game that takes some playing through!

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	87%
Playability	84%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	83%
Overall	85%



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Each entry will be listed alphabetically under area headings, split between software and hardware.

The Directory will be published in the September Issue (on sale August 28th).

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MOLECULE MAN

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Robin Thompson**

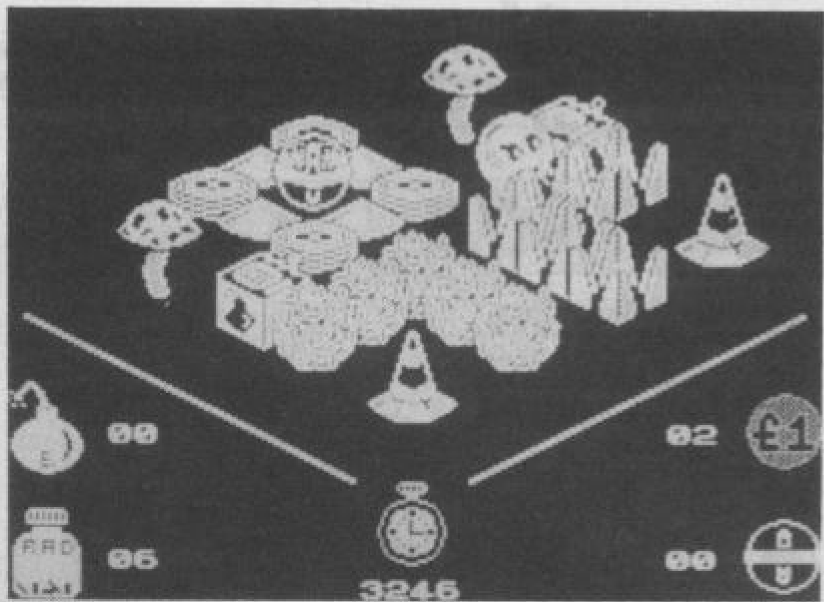
By a strange twist of fate you have suddenly become Molecule Man — a round ball on legs, trapped within a nightmarish maze contaminated by radiation. All around you, abstract shapes block your every move. A time clock is counting down and the radiation is gradually shortening your life. The only way to escape is via the teleporter. However, there's a problem. You can only use the teleporter when sixteen circuits have been found and installed in it. These circuits are scattered around the huge 3D maze in *Molecule Man* and are the key to escape — and survival.

Luck is not on your side. A maze contaminated by radiation is not the healthiest place to be stuck in. The only way to stay alive under these conditions is by taking anti-radiation pills. At the start of the game Molecule Man has a supply of twenty of these tablets, but in order to survive he must eat one every few seconds, so his stock of pills deplenishes rather quickly. Dotted around the maze are anti-radiation tablet vending machines where new supplies of pills can be obtained. Life isn't cheap though, and tablets cost money. Molecule Man came unprepared — his pockets are completely devoid of small change when he enters the maze. Thankfully the inhabitants of the maze are rather untidy fellows, as £1 coins can be found on the floor, and the dispensary is happy to exchange them for pills.

Apart from the money and the circuits, bombs also have to be collected during the game. When Molecule Man has found his money he must decide whether to spend the money on extra life-giving pills or bombs. The bombs come in handy for destroying sections of the maze walls, allowing access to new, unexplored parts of the maze. The status area keeps tabs on the number of bombs, tablets, coins and pieces of transporter circuit MM is carrying.

The screen is made up of a variety of strange shapes that mark out the boundaries of the maze. These vary from traffic cones to magic toadstools — each screen is different. Once you come to the edge of one screen, Molecule Man automatically trundles to the next one in his search for the way out.

The basic maze in the game would put the designers of Hampton Court maze to shame. If you become bored with the layout, an editor is provided so that you can redesign the playing area, altering objects that make up the maze to fit your requirements. The game can be made as easy or as hard as you like, and customised versions can be saved to tape for later sessions at the game of Survival.



Torn between a pill dispenser and a bomb dispenser, the chubby Molecule Man can't make up his mind what to spend his money on. Pills would be a good idea — life is running short

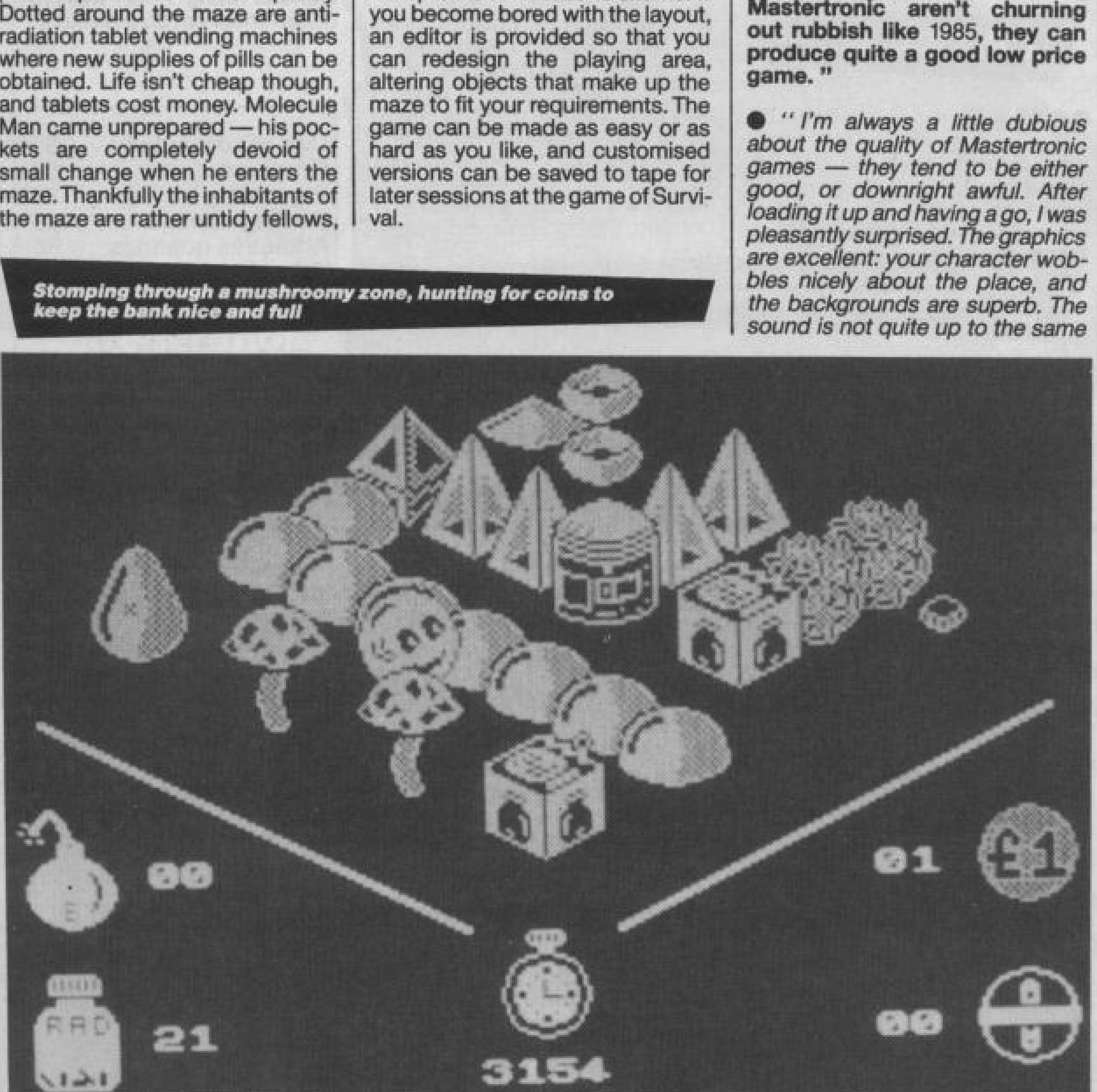
CRITICISM

● "**Gosh, what nice graphics! There are lots of good bits that make it both visually attractive and fun to play. I found** Molecule Man **pretty addictive. The maze designer knocks spots off, say, the** Caves of Doom **editor, being colourful, easy to use, quick and efficient; creating new mazes is almost as good as the game itself, though not quite! The price is one of the game's best features: for £1.99, it's a steal! Just goes to show that when Mastertronic aren't churning out rubbish like** 1985, **they can produce quite a good low price game.**"

● "*I'm always a little dubious about the quality of Mastertronic games — they tend to be either good, or downright awful. After loading it up and having a go, I was pleasantly surprised. The graphics are excellent: your character wobbles nicely about the place, and the backgrounds are superb. The sound is not quite up to the same standard as the graphics but it is adequate. The game itself is made a lot more playable by the easy-to-use Editor: if you decide that the maze supplied with the game is too hard you can design your own layout without the usual grief associated with screen Editors. This game would be quite a good deal for seven quid, so it is well worth the Mastertronics two pound price tag. What more can I say other than 'buy it'?*"

● " Mastertronic have yet again come up with a beautifully presented game with all the options you could want, and more. The actual game is a lot of fun to play and a lot of thinking is needed to plan out your strategy and decide whether to buy extra life or a bomb. The graphics are well up to the usual 3D-ish type maze games and everything is big and well distinguished. As you change screens the next location is flicked up immediately which means there's no slacking in your quest for the circuits, or the pills. A very nice addition is the screen designer; this is very easy to use and can give the whole game a completely new look. It's a pity you couldn't change the look of the actual characters and can only affect their positioning. *Molecule Man* shows that a cheap price doesn't necessarily mean a cheap looking game. "

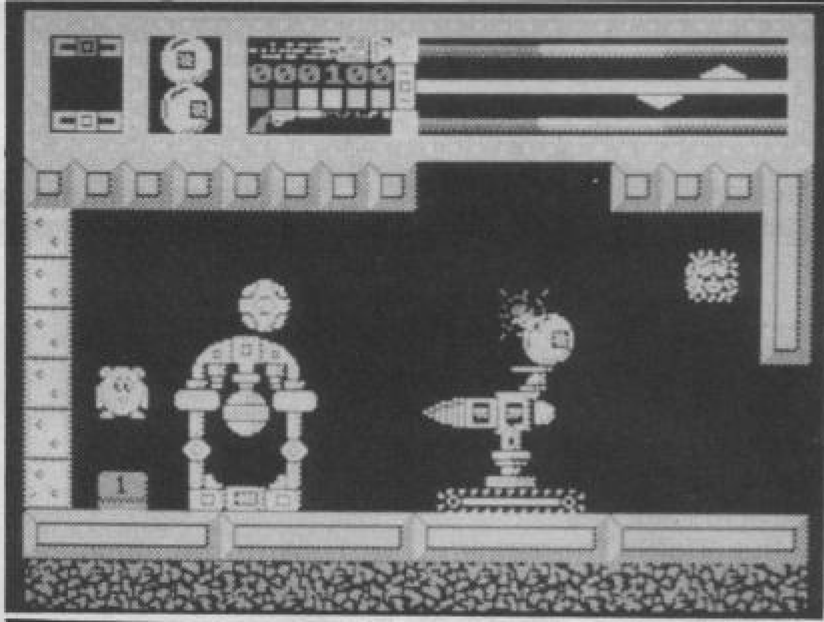
Stomping through a mushroomy zone, hunting for coins to keep the bank nice and full



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: a little strange, but okay
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: large and detailed
Sound: adequate
Skill levels: one
Screens: 256
General rating: An excellent piece of budget software

Use of computer	85%
Graphics	87%
Playability	83%
Getting started	81%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	91%
Overall	**85%**



Super Droid has just killed a Security Guard, and it explodes in a shimmer of metallic bits. Cameron's a real action photographer, you know

EQUINOX

Producer: Mikro-Gen
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Raphael Cecco with Chris Hinsley, Dave Perry and Nick Jones**

A far flung mining asteroid, Sury Ani 7, becomes contaminated with radioactive waste. The miners abandon it in great haste for fear of radiation poisoning, but the asteroid contains valuable mineral resources and the authorities are reluctant to abandon the mining operations with so much material yet to be extracted. No living being can survive the high radiation levels in the mines, and the Powers That Be are faced with a serious problem.

Eventually, a Dedicated Disposal Droid is sent into the depths of the asteroid to deal with the deadly radioactive canisters that are the root of the problem.

This would be a relatively simple mission for a Disposal Droid but for one thing: in their haste to flee the contaminated asteroid, the mining staff forgot to turn off the security system. The abandoned mining colony is now an almost inpenetrable fortress guarded by multi-coloured Security Droids programmed to materialise next to any intruder the system detects. The Security Droids don't destroy your droid instantly, but clashes with Security Droids result in small explosions as bits of Disposal Droid are scattered around the mining system. Three lives are provided at the start of the game, and once these have been lost the mission is terminated unsuccessfully.

The Security Droids are not invincible. DDD is equipped with a powerful laser which is more than adequate for blasting the Security Droids into the hereafter. Unfortunately, Security Droids seem to have trouble staying dead, and rematerialise shortly after they've been zapped.

Once the radioactive canisters have been located they must be disposed of. The only way to make sure the glowing isotopes inside the canisters don't re-contaminate the asteroid is to sling them down a disposal chute into a lead lined safe room below. There are eight levels on Sury Ani 7, and each one must be cleared of the troublesome canisters before work can begin on the next level. A time limit is involved — one canister on each level is particularly unstable and has to be dumped in the disposal chute before it explodes taking you and the asteroid with it.

The Disposal Droid has a variety of methods for moving around the mine system. Apart from the conventional upwards, downwards and side to side manoeuvres, it has a retro-thrust — a sort of Turbocharger that is very useful for making a quick getaway from Security Droids. The retro-thrust unit demands large amounts of fuel, and if the Droid suffers fuel starvation for too long, it explodes. Batteries can be collected to replenish energy.

Movement between certain locations is possible via teleporters — there is a small charge for using these. One droid life is exchanged for a cyan teleport credit which can be obtained from the credit dispensers. The trans-level transporter ensures safe passage between mining levels, but numbered level passes have to be collected before inter-level transportation is permitted. Access is only granted if the droid has a pass with a number less than or equal to the number of the level you want to travel to.

A status area at the top of the screen monitors progress. A window to the left acts as the inventory; the next window shows how many lives remain while a third window shows the score, based on the number of canisters and Security Droids eliminated. A row of coloured squares shows how much time is left before the unstable canisters explode, while fuel and laser energy supplies are indicated on a bar display.

What sort of Droid Driver are you?

CRITICISM

● **" After the mediocre** Battle Of The Planets, **Mikro-Gen have gone back to their old 'lots of colour' policy and it seems to have worked well. The graphics are superb and it's obvious that a lot of time has gone into fitting all the aliens and scenery into character squares, thus avoiding attribute problems. The sound effects are sparse, but what is there is very effective and suits the play well. This is a very playable game because all the problems can be solved with common sense, and the shoot em up element is great as well. "**

● *" Gosh! I like this game. If I hadn't been cheating, I'm sure it would have been very difficult, but as it was, I thought it was great fun. The graphics are colourful and well animated, and the sound is reasonable, but the title tune is even better. The instructions within the game are excellently done, and overall, Mikro-Gen have come up with another product that is simply excellent, very playable, and addictive. "*

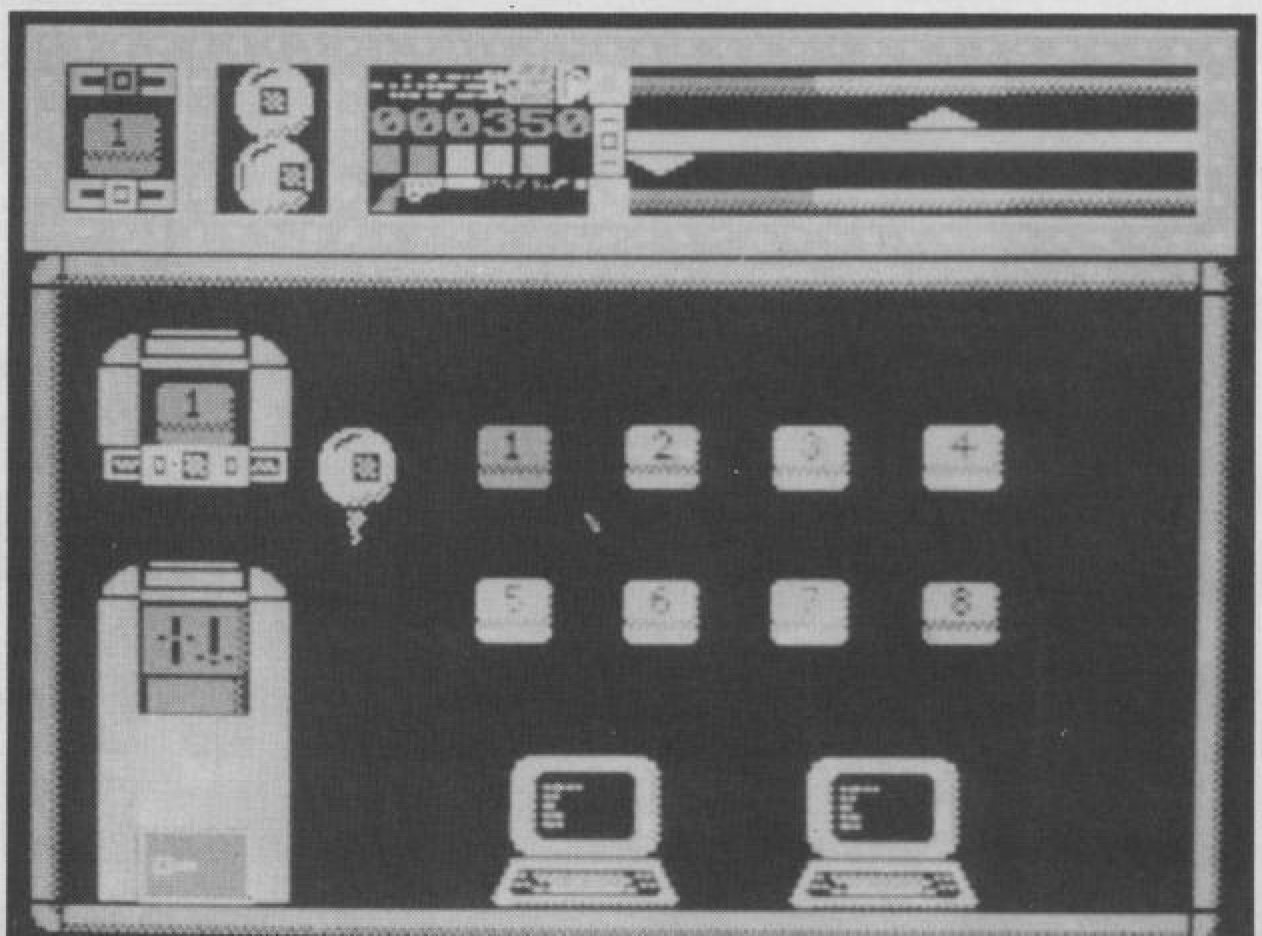
● " At first sight *Equinox* looks and 'feels' similar to *Starquake* — you are playing in the same sort of area. The game itself isn't as playable as it could be because shooting up the nasties to clear a path for yourself can be very testing as your laser isn't very effective. The graphics are nicely animated and detailed; the backgrounds are colourful, yet I couldn't spot any colour clash. The sound is very good, with some spot effects during the game and an excellent tunette on the title screen. *Equinox* takes a little getting used to, but once you do it is great fun, although I'm not sure that I'd be all that pleased about forking out ten quid for it. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: A use, M fire, Q thrust, O left, P right, 3 pause
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: carefully and cleverly done
Graphics: very pretty, neat animation
Sound: good, but a little sparse
Skill levels: one
Screens: 128
General rating: A very well produced shoot em up adventure

Use of computer	**88%**
Graphics	**87%**
Playability	**89%**
Getting started	**85%**
Addictive qualities	**88%**
Value for money	**84%**
Overall	**87%**

The Disposal Droid has pass problems in the transporter zone — the right pass card is vital if travel between levels is to be achieved





LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM

Getting through this FORUM has been a bit of a dash because of a new project I'm involved with for the Newsfield Powers That Be. For the moment it will have to remain a secret, but I promise to share it as soon as I'm allowed! What with that, the runner beans, oiling my bicycle chain and reading your letters, it's been a full month. For the best letter of the month, and the valued and much prized £20 worth of software, I chose this one because it's informative and a different view of life, the universe and whatnot . . .

VIEW FROM THE HIGH STREET

Dear Lloyd,
Much has been written about home copying (or tape piracy/ theft), particularly from the viewpoints of the copier and of the programmer. I have never seen a retailer put his point of view forward, and since I work for one of the larger national retail chains (though I am in no way connected with software retailing) I feel it is only fair that this side of the case is mentioned.

In a large high street shop the different types of merchandise are generally in fierce competition with each other for available space on the sales floor. The products which are sold are usually those which:

a) Conform with the accepted concept of the particular retailer, eg newspapers in WH Smith, cosmetics in Boots, etc.
b) Generate a good customer flow, ie attract a lot of customers who may well buy other products during their visit to the shop.
c) Show a good net profit to the retailer.

Room in the High Street is becoming increasingly scarce and therefore increasingly costly. Normally, the greater the demand for a product — ie the more that are sold — then the better the profitability, and the more likely that the product will continue to be seen on the shelf. Any activity which reduces the demand for a product reduces the profitability and renders it liable to be replaced on the shelf by other merchandise. Home copying is such an activity, as also is the theft of inlay cards to use with copied tapes.

So please Lloyd, don't condone people like Mark Fernihough in last month's Forum. 33 originals out of a total of 200 games may not be enough to prevent a return to the days when we had to search the back streets of the nearest large city for our software.

One more point on a totally different subject. Please tell John Minson (page 14 Issue 28) that Ocean did put out *Superbowl* in bugged form. I bought it excitedly after months of waiting only to find it totally corrupted. Today I received the 'proper' version back from Ocean and although it loads and runs there are still several parts of the game which don't work as they should according to the instructions. This seems to be a recent habit with Ocean (Imagine). *Ping Pong* also contains a basic bug — when deuce is reached, service does not alternate but remains with Player 1. Does anyone actually try their games before they are sent out to grab our hard saved pennies?
Colin May, 68 Runswick Drive, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 1JB

On your last point, I wonder myself. There seems to be a lot of bug-ery these days, and at a time when we're told that the state of programming has never been higher. I wonder whether the pressure of getting already delayed games out is getting to the programmers.

Your views on how hard it is to get product onto the shop shelves should prove interesting to loads of people. We consumers so often think goods appear there as if by magic, when in fact it takes tenacity, ingenuity and often a lot of money for the producer to succeed on each product. Thanks for the letter, and £20 of software is on its way to you as soon as Aunty Aggie gets the details.
LM

CHIPS TO GO

Dear Lloyd,
Thought you might be interested in this Ad from Newcastle **Evening Chronicle**: *Lady £6 Reslaw Hat to match, £5. Cost £30. Tel. 2685508.* ***ZX MICROWAVE,*** *brand new, unused, £20. Tel. 4825227 after 5 pm. SANDSTONE, 2in. thick, suitable fireplace, etc., approx. one sq metre, surplus to requirement, £3.50 Jarrow.*

What next?: McCain oven ready silicon chips?
T Walker, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Fishy but true, huh?
LM

HELP!

Dear Lloyd,
I'm writing to you for help, for I need the address of a software company called Generation 4, can you or anyone find this for me. You are my only hope for you have the best FORUM around, but I wish people would stop complaining and start appreciating more often. I've heard of great computer games keeping you up after midnight but this magazine certainly does.
E Bennett, Costa Del Silencio, Arona, Sur De Tenerife, Canary Islands.

Thanks for the compliments, but I'm afraid I can't come up with an answer, no one here has ever heard of them. Perhaps this is a European software house, maybe Spanish? If so, then it's possible we wouldn't have heard of them, especially if they don't sell in Britain.
LM

GETTING FLASHY WITH THE COLOURS

Dear Lloyd,
While I was reading my way through the May 86 edition of your fab mag, I saw a letter which criticised speccy programmers for not producing a Hi-res colour routine on the speccy. I feel I should point out to the writer of that letter, Peter Dann, that in order to produce Hi-res colour similar to that on the Beeb (Sorry!), you would have to change the contents of the attribute file (The place in memory where the colour is stored) about 1,000,000 (Yes ONE MILLION) times per second, which without a second processor or some other hardware of similar high expense, would be impossible.

Okay, before you (LM that is) start getting letters about this one, I know David (God mark 2) Webb has already produced a Hi-res colour routine, but that only works on a quarter of the screen width. That routine is to be found in his brilliant book 'Advanced Spectrum Machine Language' which is published by Melbourne House. This is a very Highly recommended book and one which I would hate to be without.

However, I think that some sort of Hi-res colour routine can be produced, and I am willing to get together with any other programmers who would like to try and produce a routine of this sort. Please contact me at my address, which is at the top of this letter. Also, not wishing to use Forum as an advert section, I would like to join a software company to work on projects as a freelance programmer. Again, please contact me. I will consider any offers. Finally, to all at CRASH, keep up the good work, and congrats for being the best-selling computer mag in Britain.
Matthew Wenham, 68A Greenhill Road, Coalvill, Leics LE6 3RH

Matthew, thank you for being so technical, and sorry dash ed for not stopping his plug in time!
lm



TOO MUCH SENSELESS VIOLENCE

Dear Lloyd,
After buying CRASH issue 27 I went home and typed in some pokes for *Tau Ceti* and put it away in my magazine box.

Then one boring Sunday I suddenly realised that I hadn't read it! So out it came and I had a good read. THE MEL CROUCHER INTERVIEW was the best bit of reading since I finished *White Gold Welder* (any Steven Donaldson fan will know what I'm talking about). I think Mel Croucher should be given a medal for standing out against the 'senseless violence' in games today. (Okay, the first shoot em ups were fun but they're going too far now)

So how about CRASH doing something about it and writing MORE articles on 'thinking' software or programming? It's not just the software houses magazines that have a great influence on what software people buy.

Thanks for the interview bringing this matter to light (and for the POKES, they did work!) and I'll read my next CRASH before it goes into the old magbox.
Martin Brown, Henfield, W Sussex

He's probably an acquired taste, but I'm certainly a Steven Donaldson fan, although you have to admit that there's a lot of violence depicted in the books. Perhaps you can argue that it's not 'senseless violence', but in any fictional work violence is arguably 'senseless'. Where do you draw the line? There hasn't been all that much debate on the subject of violence in computer games although a lot of 'pundits' have had their say over the years. What do CRASH readers think? Let's have a few more views!
LM

CAM THE CAMERA

Dear Lloyd,
I decided to put pen to paper when I read last month's CRASH. I am writing about the camera work of Cameron Pound. I think his camera work is very good except I wish that for each review they would do at least one full screen shot, even though I like the close ups.
Cameran Harman (13), Warrington

It wouldn't be that your first names sound the same would it? Still, Cameron likes a bit of praise now and then. Sometimes we backroom boys feel left out by the stars (violins off). Cameron, of course, isn't the one who decides how his pictures will be presented in the mag — that's up to 'them up in Art'.
LM

A LOAD OF POINTS

Dear Lloyd,
This is my first ever letter to a magazine of any sort and this is my own personal analysis of CRASH and the computer world as I see it at the moment.

1 SOFTWARE DELAYS
During the past 12 months it has become the in thing to have software delays, eg *Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Elite, International Karate, Street Hawk, V, Knight Rider, Daley's Super Test*, etc, and the prime culprit for delayed software in 1985 was Ocean. As said in your recent interview with Imagine, over optimistic programmers are usually to blame for this.

2 SUBSCRIPTION DELAYS
Since taking out a subscription with CRASH in August 1985, I think only about 3 or 4 of those issues have come on the same day of the month. A few months ago it was stated that your subscription deliveries were being switched to a company in London, well all I can say is that they aren't all that hot on consistent monthly delivery dates, eg Friday before publication, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and even Thursday in the week of publication. What is wrong with them?

3 ULTIMATE'S DOWNFALL
When I originally got my Spectrum in 1984, the first two games I rushed out to buy were *Underwurlde* and *Knight Lore*. I'd seen reviews which couldn't praise them enough. The *Alien 8* controversy came and went, but then *Nightshade* appeared. Being a great fan of Ultimate's software up till then, I bought *Nightshade* without even seeing it reviewed, what an idiot I was! It was pure, unadulterated crap. Next *Gunfright* came, more of the same, so I didn't buy it. I haven't seen your review of *Cyberun* yet, but Popular Computing Weekly have and said they didn't know what was happening to Ultimate because it was a game in the style of *Lunar Jetman* from 1983. Personally, as a former great fan of their products, I feel sorry at what has happened to them in the last 9 months, but they've brought it all on themselves.

4 FAST LOADERS/LENSLOK
What's all this trash slamming fast loaders? I've never had a single loading problem with one and don't know what all the fuss in the past was about.

The most recent method of protection to come about is Lenslok, ah' this isn't going to stop software pirates, all they have to do is hack into the main block of code, remove the Lenslok code and away go the cassette recorders on another duplicating run.

5 DISCOUNT SOFTWARE
A lot of letters I've seen in the FORUM recently complain about the high price of today's software and this I agree with, but haven't these people seen any of the weekly adverts in PCW for discount shops? They usually give a minimum discount of 25% (and more occasionally) and I've saved around £200 buying my software from various different shops. So get looking in PCW moaning minnies and you'll find a way to cut your software bills.

6 REVIEWS
On the whole the reviews in CRASH are great, but why do we have to put up with reviews of the worst in Spectrum software? My suggestion would be to give a brief summary of all the dross games available in a month for those readers who are dumb enough to even consider buying them. I know the authors of this software might consider this unfair, but they should be ashamed at writing such trash in the first place.
S Valente, South Shields, Tyne and Wear

Delays? Well we'll see how that improves. Subscriptions are now handled by the printers in Carlisle, and from tests I can tell you that most subscribers get their copies before we even see one in the office! Ultimate's downfall and fast loaders — I'll leave that argument to the readers, but discount software — read Alan's letter about that! As to trashy games in review — CRASH has a duty to review games whatever their merits, and giving brief reviews of games we think poor leads to snappy, clever note-form writing that does a disservice to everyone. That's my view. What do others think?
LM



A GNOTHER GNU

Dear Lloyd,
After seeing the photograph of the *Lunar Jetman* trailer, I knew this task would be a bit difficult, but with a lot of determination (and my trusty assembler, *The Art Studio*) anything is possible. Five hours later, there it was, the trailer, which everyone says doesn't exist. As proof I have enclosed a printout of the trailer, so Lloyd, it does exist.

kay, so it looks like a caravan, not a trailer. Perhaps there are a few versions of *Lunar Jetman* around, or even a Multi-Storey trailer park somewhere on the planets surface. Perhaps I can't draw trailers very well, and caravans are easier to draw. Anyway, the caravan does exist, if only in my imagination so make of it what you want to.
Anton Hobbs, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Yours is obviously the existentialist version of Lunar Jetman*, Anton. You know the old wives tale about every time you say you don't believe in fairies another one dies, well this is the reverse — every time someone says they believe the trailer exists, another one appears. This way Ultimate needn't write a game, just provide players with a scenario and let them get on with it!*
LM

THE ART OF S·M·A·S·H

Dear CRASH,
I'm writing this letter in the middle of a boring maths lesson, hence the lined A4 paper but that's another matter. Anyway this is about your magazine's policy of giving CRASH SMASHES. As the best computer games magazine on the market (yes, better than ZZAP!) I feel that the award of a CRASH SMASH should be given only to games that break new ground in Spectrum games/graphics/sounds Thus, giving a SMASH to games like *Lords of Midnight*, *Knight Lore*, *Fourth Protocol* and *Avalon* was valid. But giving SMASHes to *Technician Ted*, 4 of the Wally Week games and *Alien 8* wasn't.

One was an ordinary platform game, the second lot were basically the same game with different scenarios and the third which is undeniably of a high standard is too similar to its predecessor. Why wasn't *Match Day* SMASHed? it was definitely the most exciting sports simulation of its time. I would like to know what you at CRASH think makes up a CRASH SMASH? Anyway back to the Maths.
Carrin Charles, Hackney, London

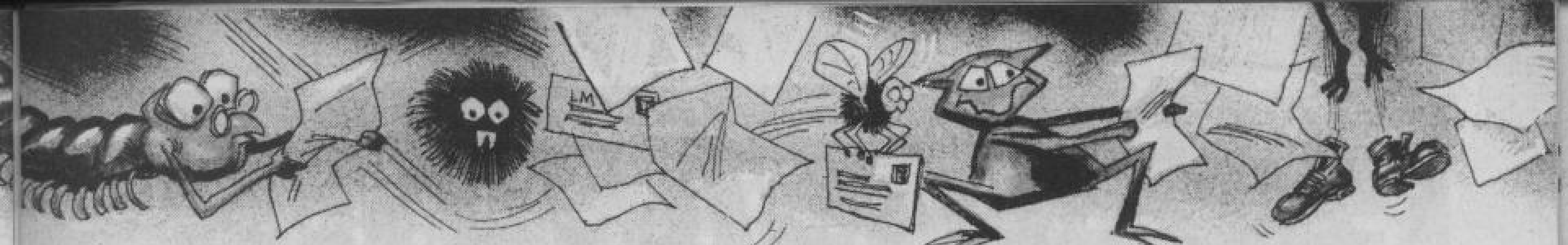
I don't know why you think the SMASH should only go to games that break new ground. To do that you would have to define 'new ground' which would be grounds for loads of arguments. In any area of endeavour be it films, books, plays or games, there are only so many ways of approaching the basic idea — it's the way the designer/author implements and uses those ideas that makes the difference between ordinariness and brilliance, and it's those factors we look for in reviewing any game.
LM

WE ARE DERIVATI

Dear Lloyd,
The main item that attracted my retina in the April issue of your glorious publication was the 'Mel' Croucher interview. In it, he states that he finds 'violent' games 'unpleasant' and 'inadequate' however his arguments to this effect are rather strange. His first point is irrelevant: all games are just pixels and beeps — even his own beloved *Deus Ex Machina* — and not every game is based on *Friday 13th* or *Rambo* or anything in particular.

His second point is that they are 'derivative'! Derivative of what, may I ask? If you take the view that all so-called 'violent' games are the same then by the same reasoning, all records with guitars in them must be the same and all people called Arthur must also be the same. However, they are not! I fail to see how anyone could claim that, say, *Elite* is derivative of *Eliza* and other such programs.

His third objection is that they are 'socially destructive'. He claims that it is 'dangerous to encourage young people to



NOT
VE, MEL!

believe that winning is to do with killing'. All computer games are necessarily rather abstract and I cannot see how anyone could associate the disappearance of a sprite with the death of an actual, living being. The point is that most of Mr Croucher's arguments are based on the premise that young people are stupid and mindless and need protecting from 'the men of violence' by self-styled 'Moral Guardians' such as Mr Croucher. The proof of this is in a later paragraph where he describes 14-15 year olds as 'little children' who 'can only be derivative — it is impossible for them to come up with an original idea for even if they do they haven't the vocabulary to express it'!

This is total rubbish! What on Earth stops 15 year olds from producing original ideas? The answer is — nothing. Mr Croucher only says this because he is jealous that a 15 year old can produce a better game than his aged self. I mean, how many people can honestly say they prefer playing *Deus Ex Machina* to say, *Commando*?

The point is that I feel 'violent' games perform a useful task by harmlessly purging people of their naturally violent instincts. Let's face it — humans ARE violent. There's a whole area of the brain devoted to aggression a relic from reptilian times, and moaning about it isn't going to make it go away. I just wish that people like Mr Croucher would bog off back to Mary Whitehouseland and leave the rest of us in peace.
Love, **S**

I don't know who you are 'S', but there's not a lot to add to that, since I agree with you completely. Keep up the good thinking!
LM



OCEANS OF SMASHES

Dear Lloyd,
In the April issue, Jason Harding wrote a letter complaining that Ocean didn't receive enough CRASH SMASHES, and that CRASH had something against them. I totally disagree. So far, Ocean have produced 8 CRASH SMASHES: *Moon Alert, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, World Series Baseball, Hypersports. Yie Ar Kung Fu, Mikie* and more recently: *Batman* and *Ping Pong*, so how he could say they only had 1 CRASH SMASH in 1985, I honestly don't know.
Mark Barnwell, Crafthole, Cornwall
PS If Dom Handy has seen all the pictures in *Sam Fox Strip Poker*, why doesn't he send in some photos of them to prove it.

Ha ha — you're not going to catch Dom out with that one! You'll just have to try harder, especially now Sam's 'Otituary' has appeared in the SUN. As for Ocean Smashes, well some readers do get funny bees in their bonnets.
LM

OVERCHARGING A MISTAKE

Dear Lloyd,
I thought as a regular CRASH reader I would bring this point to your attention.

A week or so before Christmas 1985 my mum and I were out doing some Christmas shopping. We went into a well known shop called WH SMITH and purchased some computer games and other goodies. Among the games we purchased was *Rambo* for £9.95. At the time I thought the price was a bit high for Ocean games but I didn't make any comment and gave the man the money. After Christmas I was reading CRASH and I came across an Ocean advert with Rambo advertised for £7.95. I thought to myself that there was something fishy going on so I told my mum and we went back to that branch of WH SMITH. We went to the computer desk and told them about the extra money they had charged. The man on the desk said he couldn't give us our money back seeing as WH SMITH normally raises the price of things at Christmas. When I got back home I looked in the December issue of CRASH and found that Ocean were advertising *Rambo* for £7.95, so my mum phoned WH SMITH and told them about this. In the end I got my two pounds back. They said it had been some kind of error. Anyway two weeks ago I was looking in a different WH SMITH shop not far from the other one and I saw *V* for £9.95, another Ocean game. What is happening?

Somebody please tell before I go totally mad with these high prices WH SMITH are charging.
Sean Powrie, Wisbech, Cambs

It does sound like a mistake, probably genuine, even though silly. What doesn't sound like a mistake is WH Smith charging more for games at Christmas — that sounds like a confused sales assistant covering up stupidly. If you encounter that kind of thing you MUST insist on seeing the manager in charge of computers, or failing that, the shop's over manager.
LM



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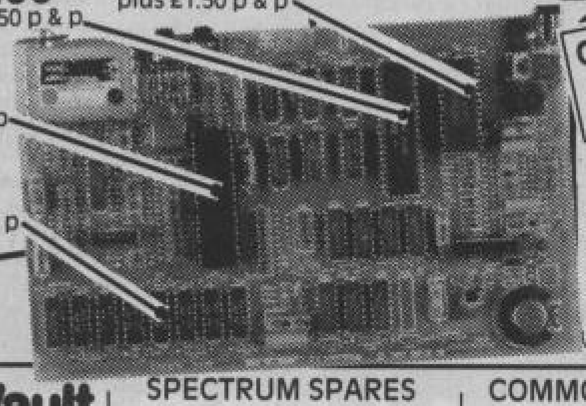
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RADIATION SHOCK HORROR!

Dear Lloyd,
We are in trouble! I mean BIG trouble! Now I know your thinking, 'What's he going on about?' Well I'll tell you! It's that power plant disaster at Chernobyl! The cloud of radiation came over here and has affected some people's brains! A perfect example of this is a certain Anthony Jacobson, who launched an attack on CRASH and ZZAP!, which just so happen to be my two favourite mags! Now, being sister mag to ZZAP! you must also have heard this madness (which was in *Computer Trade Weekly*, week of April 21). On opening my ZZAP! I saw in the editorial, *ZZAP! — The Corrupt One!*

ZZAP! The Corrupt One?!? Immediately I started to read, and soon my face started to cringe!

'The issue I have to hand of ZZAP! 64 has 37 pages of reviews and 14 pages of competitions . . .' is how Anthony Jacobson began. So what? That's GREAT! Keep it up. Further on he added, 'Magazines of the style of ZZAP! and CRASH have brought the general regard for the home computing to the elevated level of the hula hoop . . .'

Hula hoop? The cheek of the man! CRASH and ZZAP! are devoted mainly to software, which is just how me and thousands of others like it. If he doesn't he can keep it to himself!!

Further on he said: '. . . There is always an audience for simple minded pap . . .'

WHAT!!!? Now he's getting nasty! He's referring to ZZAP! and CRASH readers!! Spluttering on, I read, 'The nasty trivialisation that the CRASH — style stable offers, like fluff covered lollipop, is, I regret to think, no doubt good for the bank balances of its publishers, but for the UK computer industry it is corrupt and dangerous'.

Corrupt and dangerous? Why then are CRASH and ZZAP! the two best selling mags in Britain?! (Hooray!) And, '. . . Poor Commodore User is an example of what can happen to anyone when the rot sets in . . . ?

In other words, ZZAP! is better than Commodore User. Anyway, who is he calling rot? In my view everything, well almost everything about CRASH is great as it is, so don't take any notice of Anthony Jacobson (yuk!), The corrupt one!'
David Shaw, Glossop, Derbyshire

Couldn't agree with you more, David. And if you're also a ZZAP! reader as you seem to be, you'll no doubt appreciate the cover of issue 15, which is out as I write — a fluffy lollipop special!
LM

PERVERTED AND HORRIFIC!

Dear Lloyd,
During the past few months in CRASH, the Forum has contained letters from angry parents concerning the drawings shown in your magazine.

Why is it people are shocked by these kind of pictures when there is one far worse? On page 76 of the Christmas Special, there is an advert featuring the Wally family in *Three Weeks in Paradise* from Mikro-Gen. At first glance it seems rather fun.

On further inspection you will notice that one of the natives has his index finger extended, and is pulling down young Herbert's trunks, to reveal his. . . But what is the native going to do with that finger? I will leave you to draw your own conclusions on this.

It just shows that Oliver Frey isn't as perverse and horrific as some people think.
Mark Bonner, Birkenshaw Uddingston, Glasgow

Oh dear, has anyone actually said our Oli is perverted and horrific?! Thank you Mark for drawing our attention to the interesting fact that most offences are committed inside people's minds! Perhaps you should look at it the other way, maybe Mikro-Gen's naughty native is actually an ethnic Mary Whitehouse who is actually in the process of pulling Herbert's trunks UP. No? Well I try . . .
LM

THE PRICE OF ARCADES

Dear Lloyd,
People are always complaining about the price of software but this weekend I visited Blackpool and went into the arcades and it cost me a fortune and with the money I spent I could have bought a couple of games.

When you buy games it takes you a few attempts to get used to it, in an arcade if you have never played the game it will cost you a lot to get used to it. So if you count how many times you play your game and add up how much it would have cost you to play the same game in the arcade the same number of times, you would realise the software is well worth the asking price.
David Gorton, Blackburn, Lancs

Certainly no one has ever argued that Spectrum software isn't cheaper than playing the arcades seriously. The problem is, I suppose, that lots of readers would say they never do go into arcades, and therefore the argument is a bit beside the point!
LM

GUN FRIGHT IN BED

Dear Lloyd,
Here I am in bed (Thursday 1st May) Reading CRASH No 27 April — come on CRASH get your water pistols out and go fire them — I am on about *Gun Fright*. I bought the game before your reviews on it — wow what a game! Now that you reviewed *Cyberun* I stuck my hand out to my mum: 'Can I have another £9.95 for a game?' She stuck her hand out and said in a quiet voice, 'What do I get for washing your clothes, feeding you?' etc. Well she wants pay. Help! Why do games cost so much? Well here I am with a rotten cold saving up for *Cyberun*.
Gareth Jones, Allinthwaite, Cumbria

I bet she'll be sorry when you're gone, passed away from the effects of a cold and wasted away for want of a game. She'll regret being so mercenary then.
LM

CUT PRICE ISN'T CHEAP

Dear CRASH,
I am writing to you to warn other Spectrum owners against buying cut-price software from little known software firms.

In the March issue of CRASH, Jon Rose from Bognor Regis wrote advising Speccy owners to send through mail order for cheap computer games. So, taking this advice, I sent to one of these so-called cut-price computer firms for a copy of Rainbird's *Art Studio*. Then I waited and waited and waited and waited. Finally after receiving nothing in six weeks, my mum wrote a demanding letter to UNITSOFT in Glasgow asking for either Art Studio or my £11.20p in refund.

After only TWO DAYS!!! I arrived home from school, and there, stuck in the letter box was a package. After closely examining the envelope I found to my dismay that it was the demanding letter that my mum had sent which had been returned. As I ripped up the letter I noticed a small post office sticker which read: UNITSOFT, FREEPOST, GLASGOW G1 4BRC UNDELIVERED, GONE AWAY. My misery was complete.

I hope this letter serves as a warning to all prospective buyers, that however believable the advert may at first seem, never send for cut-price software.
Alan Panter, Wokingham, Berkshire

The history of games software (and it's not such a long one) is littered with the golden promises of cut price mail order firms most of whom lasted a short time and rarely delivered. The evil practice still continues. Alan's sad tale should act as a stern warning. NEVER send money to mail order firms unless you know absolutely who you're dealing with. Cheapness isn't everything.
LM





DAMAGING OLI

Dear Lloyd,
Having read all the letters of complaint on Oliver Frey's paintings I thought I would add my comments on the subject. Firstly lots of people wrote about the 'horrific' effect on impressionable youngsters. Now this may be true in some cases but in most it's just rubbish. My brother is eleven and so are many of his friends, they all read CRASH regularly, suffering no ill effects I may add. In fact most kids just look at the writing and the photos — the drawings are a nice decoration which brighten up the text.

What worries me is that the constant barrage of abuse against Oli may be damaging his work. Just look at the last few months covers, none of them, have been up to his usual standard. For example the Max Headroom cover was just a photo with only a tiny Oli sketch beneath it. Whatever happened to the brilliant covers of the first year of CRASH. Is Oliver Frey taking on too much what with ZZAP! and AMTIX! (who's covers are much better than CRASH's)?

Back to the effects of Frey art on young people. I find that the picture on the Sign Post pages is more horrific (or exciting, whichever way you see it) than any of the covers.

It usually portrays a nice Creature/person on the first page and when you turn over on the other side is a large picture of lots of these nice Creatures. People killing or torturing men.

This is very effective in a frightening sense and Oli's drawing skills carry it out perfectly.

All in all CRASH is a brilliant mag and its art beats all other magazines into the ground (who's covers seem juvenile and badly drawn compared to CRASH.) Keep up the good work and ignore all the fuss.

Richard Townsend, Erdington, Birmingham

It's nice to hear some sound sense on this long-toothed subject. Quite often, the more attention is drawn to a contentious subject, the more harm is perceived and therefore done to the very people the 'protectors' would save.
LM

CHANGE THE REVIEW SYSTEM

Dear Lloyd,
I'm writing to give my support to the idea of printing reviewers names after their criticisms. I've never understood why this has not been done before and neither do I understand the need for reviewers to remain anonymous in the first place.

Such a move is only common sense and will improve what I think can be a misleading reviewing system. Misleading, because I don't like mega-hard (boring) games like *Everyone's a Wally*. I know that now, but it cost me £10 to find out. People have different tastes, so when CRASH highly recommends a game it's influencing some people who may not like it. But this possiblility is not made clear in the reviews.

So instead of babbling on about how many bonus screens there are etc, shorten the game description and put in more detailed analysis of who may like the game and so on. Remember criticisms are important and more often they fail to serve their purpose. I, myself believe the reviewing system is very unreliable and should be changed. The main fault is that too many games are over-rated, that are in fact poor value for money and offer little in the way of long-term interest. Still, that is another matter and I doubt whether such a change would happen.

It seems the Questionnaire is going to decide the issue but I don't see the point in that. After all, who can object to knowing which CRASH reviewers share their tastes in games? Most of all, who can oppose a simple amendment that will enhance the reviewing system which forms the bulk of the magazine?

Martin Dean, Stockwell, London

Using the reviewers' names is still under consideration, but I suspect they will be used. You can't blame a system based on reviewing for being flawed because of personal opinion. It really is up to the reader to decide on game style, content and gameplay from what is written. I do, however, agree that knowing a reviewer's taste is a useful factor in deciding whether to agree with what they say or not.
LM



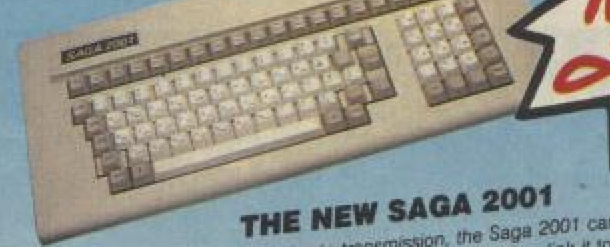


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WRONG PRICE

Dear Lloyd,
I would like to point out the malpractices of certain software dealers. I refer to the Boots branch in East Kilbride town centre. *Ballblazer* and *Barry McGuigan's Boxing* are being sold for the 128 Spectrum for £9.95 whereas all the advertisements state a price of £7.99 I cannot find any of our shops which sells these games and I would like to know if this is a common practice.
Neil Burns, East Kilbride, Glasgow

I'm afraid to say that your branch of Boots is quite correct. The 128K versions are more expensive and if you have a grouse it should be with Electric Dreams or Activision for not stating the fact on the ads you have seen (if indeed they haven't, not having an advertisement to hand to see at this second).
LM

128K AGAIN

Dear Lloyd,
Irrespective of whether you exist or not (and let's face it who cares as long as FORUM keeps running) here is my tuppence worth on the new 128K Spectrum. One major point which was not discussed in May's issue was the price of games for this machine (it may have been discussed elsewhere but I only read FORUM). More memory means more program, more program means more design and more programming and so more wages and higher priced games. This may also in turn lead to the downfall of lower budget programming outfits. Something worth thinking about.
Ali, Stevenston, Ayrshire

Right, let's get thinking then. Prices obviously are going to be a bugbear. Any other thoughts?
LM

GO BACK TO THE OLD WAYS

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing to complain, although your magazine is the best, over the last few months certain pages have been annoying me. The pages I mention are where the CRASH Smashes are reviewed.

ZZAP! has the reviewers comments in balloons dotted in between the review. Now CRASH has copied this system for the comment boxes in the Smash reviews. Why? These boxes in between the actual review are most annoying, for me anyway. I begin to read the review until I encounter a brightly coloured comment box, so I read the comment in the box, then I return to reading the review. 'So what', I hear you murmur. By the time I have finished jumping (my eyes do the jumping) in and out of the comments and chunks of review I have forgotten what was written about the game and its scenario. Please end my suffering, go back to the old system. Why not have multicoloured pages like in issue 15's *Dragontorc* review? Please stop confusing me, I hate having to read the review twice to get the 'know' of the game.

Finally, how do ZZAP! readers survive their monthly encounter with the ugly 'Zzap Zoo' team? I mean, you get pictures of them in every review, photos of them and they even appeared on the mag's cover! Disgusting.
Douglas Robertson, Carmadric, Glasgow

I know, it is disgusting. But then, superstars always are rather disgusting. I must say, I think the new look Smashes are more interesting, and the convention of having separated boxes within an article has been common in magazines for donkey's years. Sorry it confuses you though.
LM

A CONTRADICTION

Dear Lloyd,
Here is one letter not complaining about anything to do with the excellent magazine that your brilliant articles are 'featured' in but, in fact, at something that YOU wrote and something else under your name contradicting this.

The evidence that I will give will prove you don't read what you print!

Look at your page 49 of the 27th edition, (April, for those not good with numbers!). I am, of course, referring to the 'Street Hawk' letter where you said: . . . *the game hasn't been finished . . . it is coming.*
Now look at page 87 of the same issue in your 'Hall of Slime'. Note Mr Adam Liversage's claim of getting 21,030 points in the game that is not yet finished!!!

Will you please read what you write, I mean, we have to!
David Mager, Willesden Green, London
PS Answer that one if you dare!

I dare! What I wrote was quite true — so, very likely, was what Mr Liversage claimed. Ocean released a version of Street Hawk *many months earlier, BUT only through the Littlewoods Mail Order catalogue. It was not a complete version, but one rushed through to fulfill a contract they had. I do read what I write (occasionally, anyway), but the real problem is in deciphering the impression on the paper made by the worn out old record ribbon on my Hermes. Perhaps this will encourage Them in Power to buy me a new one — teo years worth of typing has taken its toll.*
LM

MORE FREY SHOCKS

Dear Lloyd,
Concerning your recent controversies over your colleague's artwork, I was amazed to find on P 98 — 99 May 86 an art form which even I felt went a bit far. Do you do this kind of thing for sensationalism? I think so. Why would you print material, getting progressively worse, month after month?

Frey has finally convinced me that he spends all his time looking through Penthouse, Razzle or Rustler to find new ideas for his artwork.

I am proud to be interested in computers, and I feel that I am justified in putting my 'O' level results on the line because of the interest. I am 16, and am certainly no puritan but I am disturbed at this serious flaw on your magazine's feature.

Bear with me when I say that none of this started before Roger Kean became editor.

I am looking forward to your reply and the reaction other readers will take.
Howard Hanson

For a start off, you mean none of this happened when Roger Kean was the editor. Graeme Kidd has been CRASH editor for a year now. Clearly he is much less puritanical than Mr Kean! The pictures you refer to were meant as a make-weight for a cover that never got done of Samantha Fox (Oli has some scruples you know). As for 'sensationalism' — gosh, we don't need that kind of thing to help sell CRASH you know. We're sending Oli out for a month's spell on the Ludlow Parish Gazette to get the feel for really nice drawings.
LM

So, enough for another month. All the team now take their leave, quietly wandering off to dark corners for a well earned rest and time to lick their FORUM wounds inflicted by a cruel-hearted public! See you next month — letters to LLOYD MANGRAM, CRASH FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

CRASH COURSE

by Rosetta McLeod



HAVING FUN WITH EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

A recent survey undertaken for the Independent Broadcasting Authority shows that a third of all households in Britain with children, now own a home computer. On the surface this seems encouraging, but the question has to be asked, To what use are these computers being put? The vast majority of home computer users may do little more than play arcade and adventure games, and it is a pity that the enjoyable educational software on offer does not reach a bigger audience. The programs from AVP Computingreviewed this month are good examples of software which can be of use both in the home and in schools, because of their relevance to the learning process.

AVP have long been known to teachers as publishers of excellent audio-visual materials, and now they have turned their attention towards educational software. Over a hundred of their own programs are described in their Primary and Secondary catalogues, together with a wide selection of titles from other educational publishers of quality. Teachers will welcome the fact that, if official requisition forms are used for ordering, titles may be obtained on a fortnight's approval.

Certainly the catalogues are well worth obtaining, and the programs I've looked at provide a useful cross-section of the wares AVP have to offer. The programs for Secondary schools cover Science, Mathematics, languages, social subjects, Economics, Computer Studies, Music, Art, careers guidance and administration, while those available for younger children represent all ages of the Primary curriculum. For more information, get in touch with AVP Computing, Hocker Hill House, Chepstow, NP6 5ER.

WINNER TAKES A HOLIDAY

Would that there were more educational programs which provide as much fun as this one! Aimed at the Geography classroom, this game teaches the user the capital cities of various countries, together with various facts about the countries. Section One, with two levels of difficulty, uses multiple choice testing for matching countries and capitals. The player has the option of learning the work on the computer before starting the game (a very useful feature) and a one player or two player/team game may be played.

Each player has a safe in the attic. To reach it, a ladder has to be climbed by answering the questions correctly. The answers are entered by pressing a key — 1 to 6 — corresponding to the choice from six alternatives displayed. If, for example, the player is asked for the capital city of Angola, Luanda, Doha, Conakry, Salisbury, Roseau or Caracas might be offered. Choosing Option 1, Luanda, answers the question correctly and one rung on the ladder is climbed. When an incorrect answer is selected in the two player game, the other player moves up the appropriate number of rungs on his or her ladder; in a single-player game and incorrect answer moves the player down the ladder.

Once the top of a ladder has been reached, the player can open the attic safe and release the money that has been saved (from £0 to £90) first to pay off the mortgage, then to save for the holiday. When the thermometer on the screen is full, a problem is given in the form of the name of a country or capital with the letters denoted by dashes. Solving this problem results in the player being given a holiday destination together with a secret code which is needed for entering the second section of the program.

I found myself going to Greece, with ticket No 59 on Flight 16, and with the secret code 143. In this part of the game, the player is given £100 to gamble. Ten questions based on the holiday destination are asked, one at a time, with five answers to choose from offered on screen against a variety of odds. Money has to be gambles so that the amount held remains within a given range. Sometimes money has to be lost to stay within the range! The questions cover a range of facts about the country, from its national airline to its approximate area. Failing to reach the target amount reveals the answers to some of the questions, and another attempt is allowed. Success in this section of the game allows the player to embark on a flight to the allocated holiday spot, but towards the end of the journey there is an emergency and the the plane has to be landed!

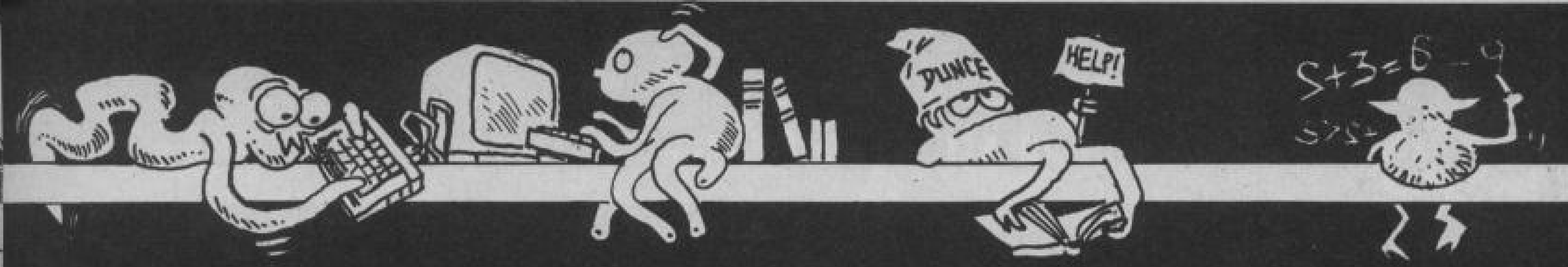
I found this game to be quite addictive. It is so enjoyable that the player is bound to pick up a lot of information without being aware that an education is being given! If used in the classroom, the game could also be useful in encouraging children to use reference books to find the answers without having to rely on guesswork. I'm afraid I haven't yet succeeded in landing the plane, but I'm definitely going to keep on trying! *Winner Takes A Holiday* costs £10 for the cassette or £12 for the Microdrive version.



Answer the questions right to climb the ladder to the attic safe and you can pay off the mortgage. Then answer some more questions to climb the ladder and grab some holiday money. Cameron's not part of his rat race — he lives in a caravan and thinks he's on holiday all the time!

COMMENTS

Control Keys: mainly number keys, but clear instructions appear on the screen
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good, but at times the flashing screen can be distracting
General rating: brilliant! This game could be played by the family at home, or the children at school. Educational and tremendous fun!



HEART AND CIRCULATION

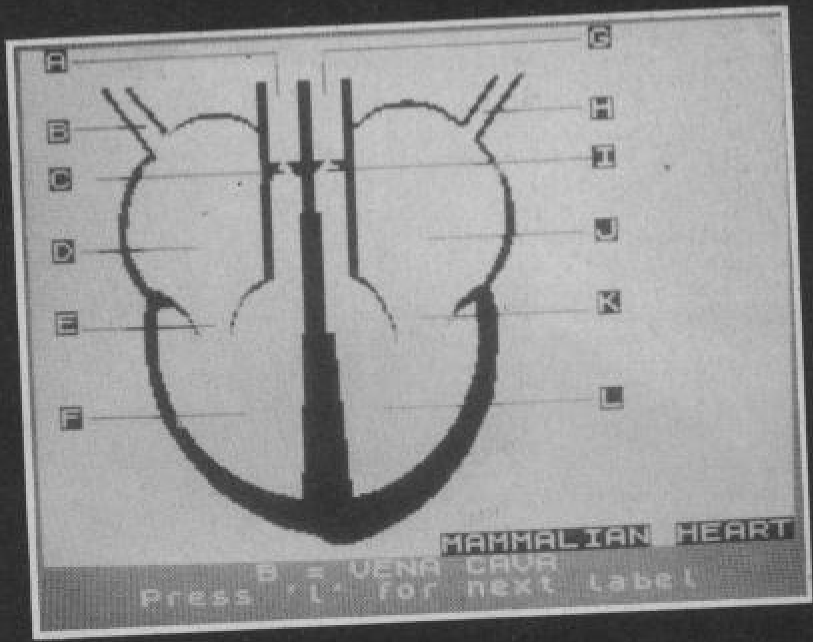
This Human Biology program, designed for use both in the classroom and at home, offers a choice of four topics: the heart; the circulation system; arteries, veins and capillaries; and blood flow. In the first section, the user has to label eleven parts of the heart, such as pulmonary arteries and veins, valves and the aorta. The correct labelling can be viewed before the test sequence, and the computer marks the answers given in the test on the screen.

Section Two — the circulation system — involves the same sort of labelling activity, again with the option of seeing the correct version first. The demonstration showing the functions of arteries, veins and capillaries is very clear and informative, and then the user is asked some questions on the topic to show understanding of the different functions performed.

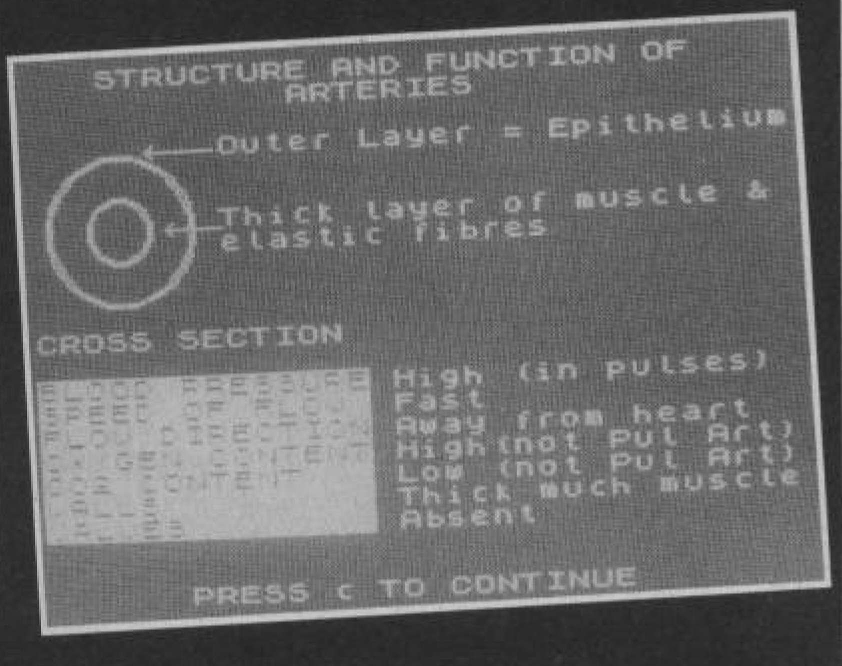
In the final section, the computer demonstrates the route taken by blood as it flows through the circulatory system, and the user can select the starting point from the following list: liver, intestine, kidney and lower body. The path taken is plotted graphically on a diagram of the circulatory system. This is a very useful program, and I particularly liked the way the computer marks the answers on the screen. Students of GCE O level and CSE will find it a helpful self-test resource. It is available on cassette at £10 or on Microdrive at £12.

COMMENTS

Control keys: single key commands
Keyboard play: fast
Use of colour: limited to red, white and black
Graphics: very good diagrams
General rating: used in conjunction with notes and textbooks, this program is a helpful revision aid.



The Mammalian Heart in all its glory — or should that be 'gory'. Name the bits and get a high score in HEART AND CIRCULATION



A spot of Human Biology in which the stringy bits known as Arteries are explained. That's HEART AND CIRCULATION for you . . .

BUYING AND SELLING

This program is a shop simulation which may be used to provide dynamic illustrations of a wide range of processes including price setting, profit and loss, stock organisation, customer reaction and so on. At the beginning, there is a choice between playing the game and the study option. The program displays all aspects of trading in both tabulated and graphic formats, and the aim, of course, is to work towards a profit-making business over the number of weeks — a period of up to twenty weeks may be selected.

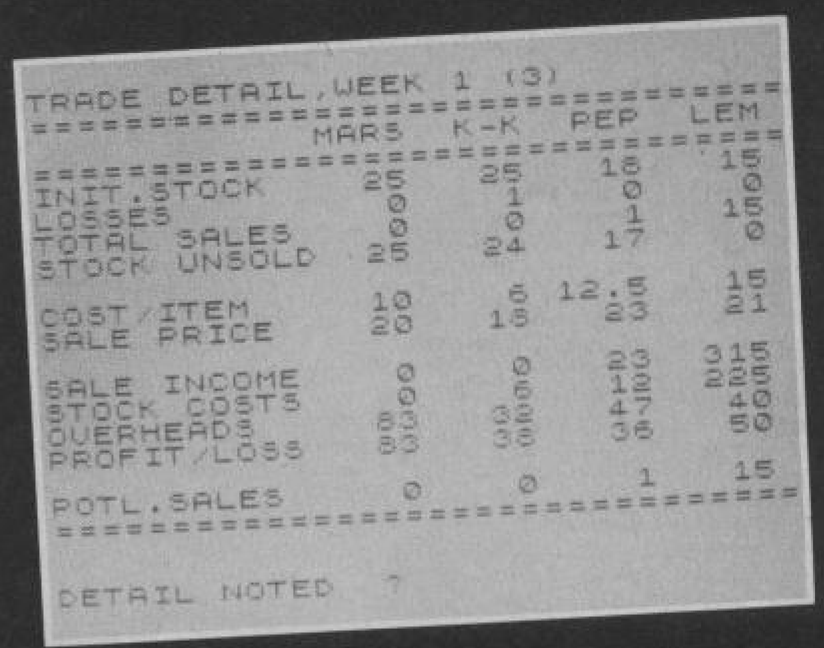
At the start of trading, the stock in hand consists of 25 Mars bars, 25 Kit-Kats, 18 bottles of Pepsi and 15 of lemonade, together with £3 of cash. The player then has to set prices for this initial stock to produce an income which will enable replacement stock to be purchased, cover overheads and losses, and also generate some profit.

The accompanying booklet gives helpful information and advice essential for succeeding in the task, while the screen displays show the trade details for each week of business, which can be sub-divided into weekly charts for each of the food items. Up to two assistants may be hired, a move which has the advantage of improving service and thus generating more potential customers, but of course staff cost money, and may prove to be dishonest!

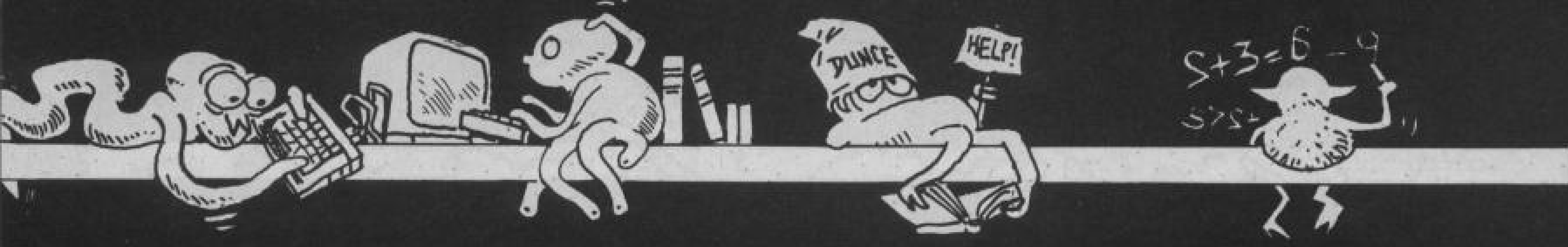
The number of factors to be borne in mind while running the business makes this game interesting and absorbing. Prices have to be set each week, staff fired or hired, goods re-ordered, overheads paid, and all the while the graphic and tabulated information must be read and understood. The study option simulates a typical trading pattern with realistic fluctuations within an acceptable range, but the game eliminates random factors and produces exact relationships. The cassette costs £10, and on Microdrive it sells for £12.

COMMENTS

Control keys: kept simple and clearly described on the screen
Keyboard play: very fast
Use of colour: black and white only
Graphics: very good
General rating: a useful and enjoyable simulation program. The absence of colour is unimportant and makes the screen displays much easier to read. For encouraging thinking and the weighing up of information, this game is invaluable.



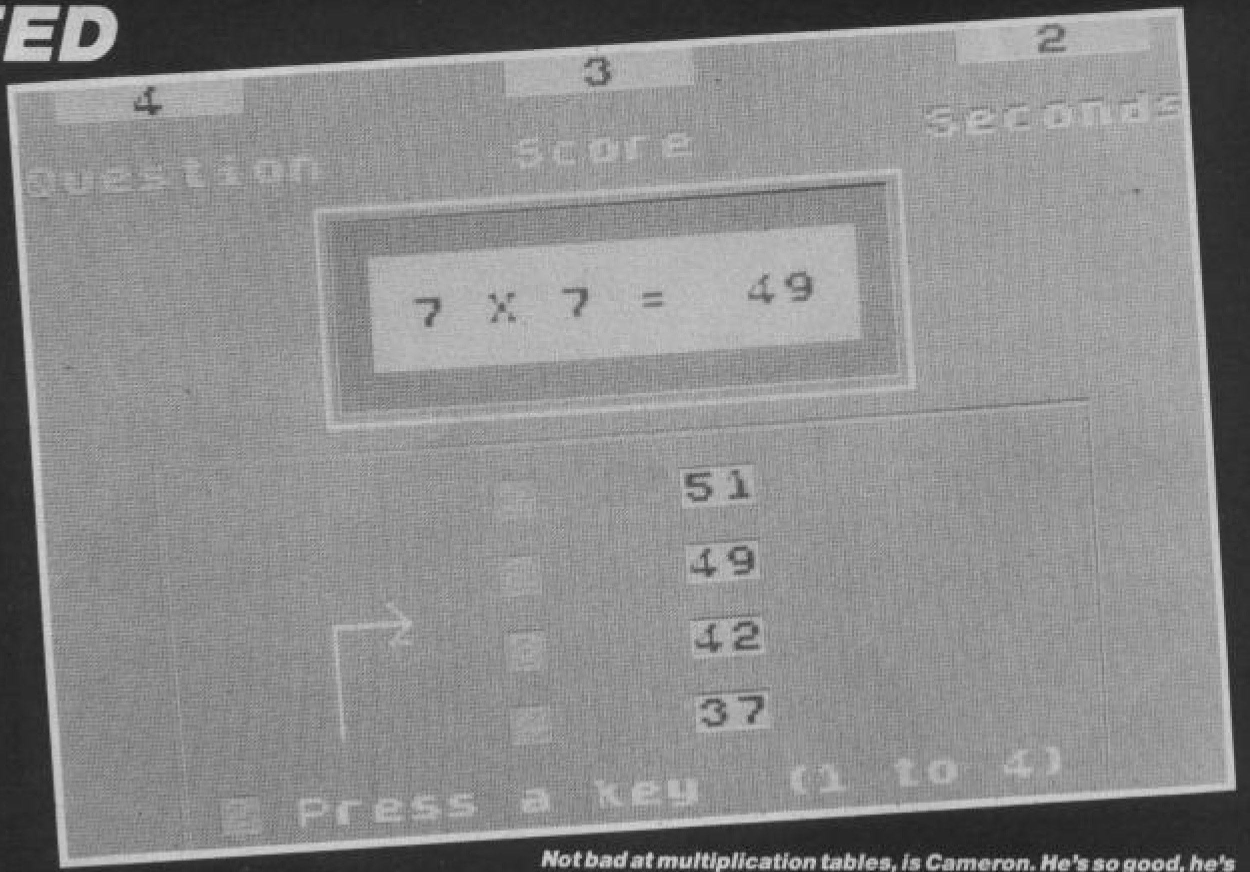
Our Cameron tries his hand at a bit of BUYING AND SELLING — it looks like he's flogging off lots of lemonade to make ends meet. It's be the CRASH Camera next!



TABLESPEED

This very enjoyable program aims to improve a child's familiarity and skill with multiplication tables. At the beginning, the user can select the time limit and set the highest number table on which questions will be asked during the session. A scoring system is in operation, so that high marks are awarded for choosing a short time limit and a difficult table. By holding down key 5, the child can get help from the computer, but will lose five points. The questions are clearly displayed on the screen together with a choice of four possible answers. This makes the program accessible even to less able children, and the time element means that older children and adults can also have fun with it.

During play, the computer gives helpful remarks, offers suggestions and words of encouragement based on the user's performance, and at the end it is possible to obtain a certificate via a printer, or to request the computer to draw a pattern on the screen. My only criticism of this excellent little program is that it is not possible to turn off the sound which began to drive me mad! The *Tablespeed* cassette costs £9, or £12 for the Microdrive version.

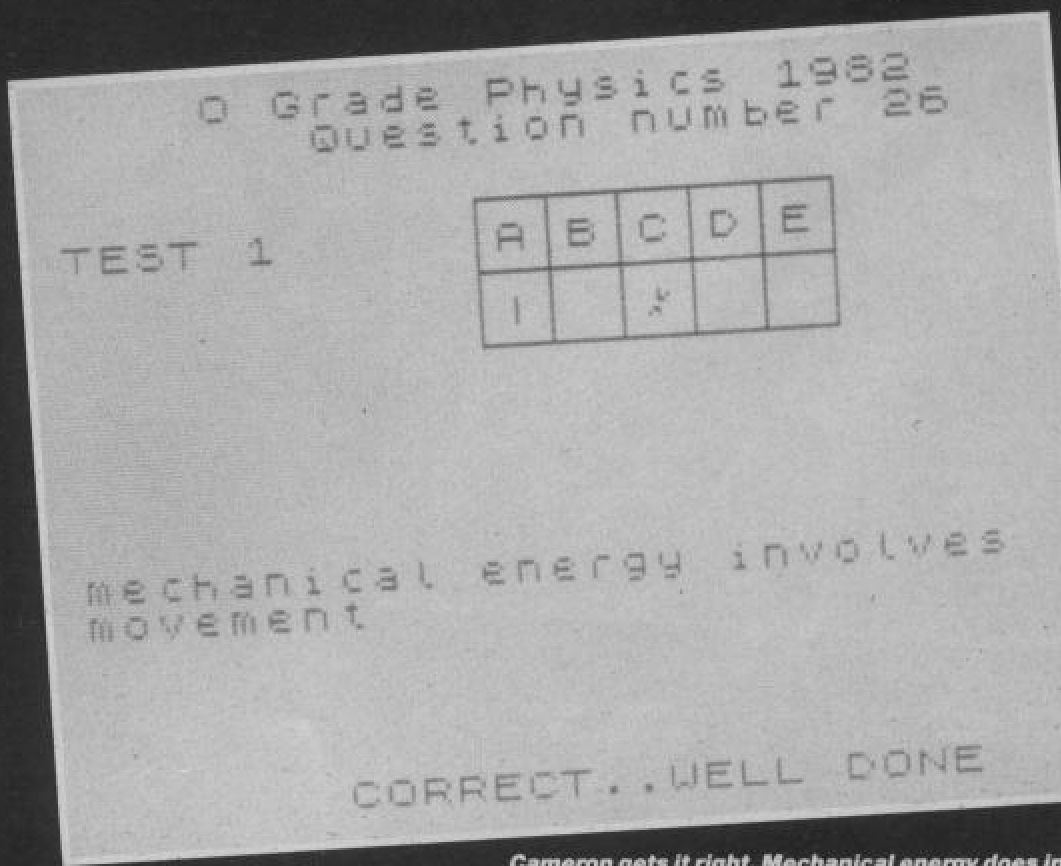


Not bad at multiplication tables, is Cameron. He's so good, he's playing TABLESPEED at full speed: two seconds a go

COMMENTS

Control keys: choose the option by pressing keys 1-4
Keyboard play: very responsive
Graphics: limited but attractive
Use of colour: very good
General rating: a very effective and enjoyable program for use with anyone from the age of 7

PHYSICS



Cameron gets it right. Mechanical energy does involve movement. That must mean that Cam (despite his nickname) has no mechanical energy on Mondays

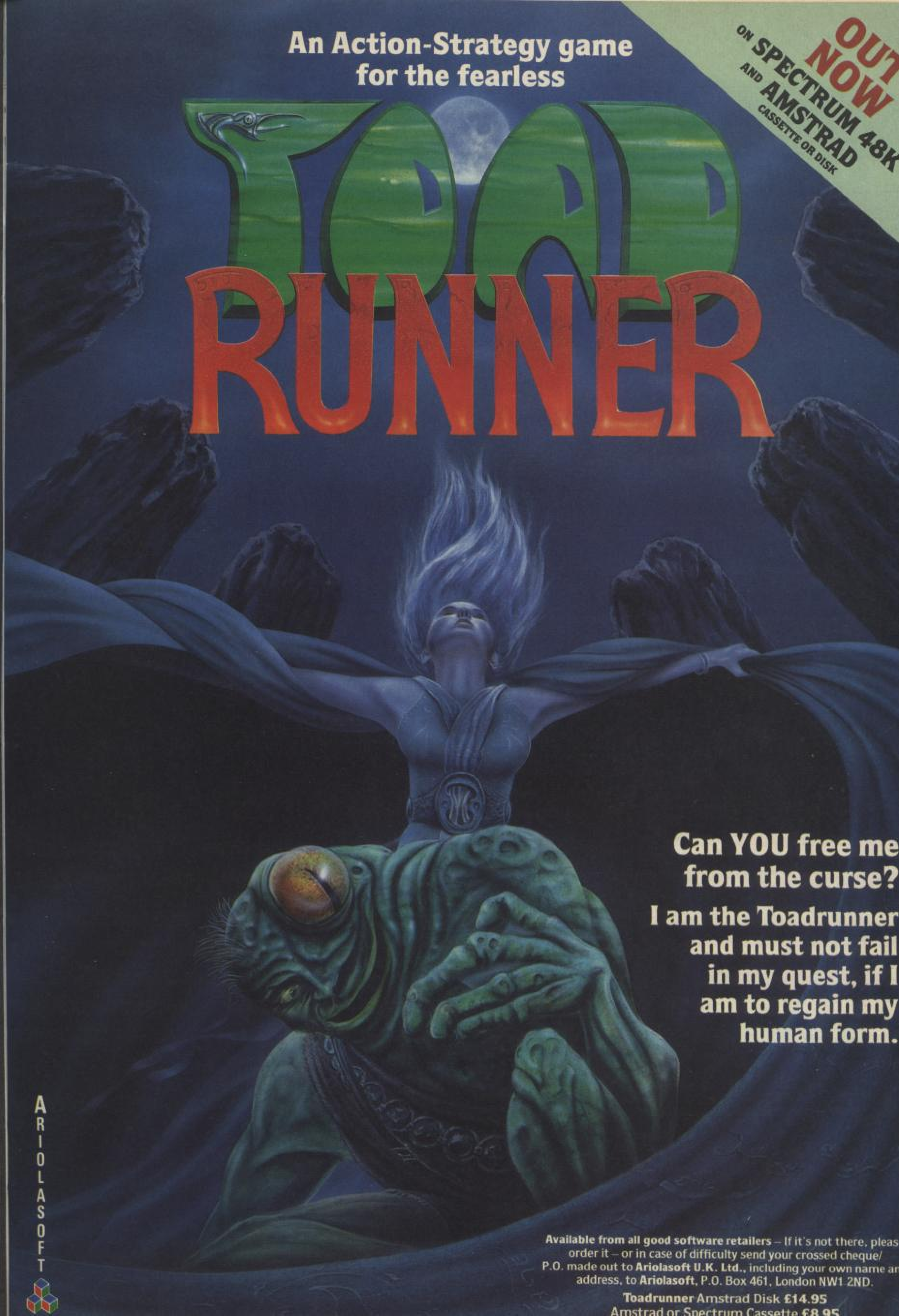
At last, the program that Physics teachers in Scotland have been waiting for! A revision cassette which covers the syllabus of the Scottish Certificate of Education 'O' Grade course. The program begins by offering a choice of four tests, with or without sound effects. Test 1 covers the 1982 'O' Grade paper, and as the questions are not on the program, the candidate needs to have a copy of the question paper. All the questions may be attempted, or a selected section may be concentrated upon from Waves, Dynamics, Heat and Gasses, Electricity and Magnetism, or Electronics and Radioactivity.

The test begins by displaying a multiple choice grid on which the user enters an answer. The option to amend the answer is given, and when the answer is confirmed the computer immediately checks it. If it is correct, the next question comes up; if wrong, a hint is given and the user is given a second try. If this is also incorrect, another hint is given, but after the third incorrect attempt, the right answer is displayed.

When all the questions have been completed, the program shows the questions which were correctly answered at the first try, those which were correct with help, and those not correct even after three attempts. A score is then given based on the following system:
Correct first time 2 marks
Correct after one hint 1 mark
Correct after two hints half mark
The cassette also contains a test-making program which enables the user to set up test data. It is possible to enter up to ninety-nine questions, split into a number of titled sections with two hints allowed for each question. Again, the questions must be of the multiple-choice type, with four or five possible answers. The instructions for entering the test questions and answers are very clear and easy to follow. All in all, this a very useful and flexible program, and I'm sorry I didn't review it in time for the SCE examinations! The package costs £8, and versions covering the 'O' level syllabus for the JMB and London boards are also available.

COMMENTS

Control keys: for the tests, you choose the option from A to E
Keyboard play: fast
Graphics: none
Use of colour: almost entirely black and white
General rating: an excellent and serious revision aid for the 'O' Grade student. The 'test-making' option makes this a flexible package which is superb value for money.



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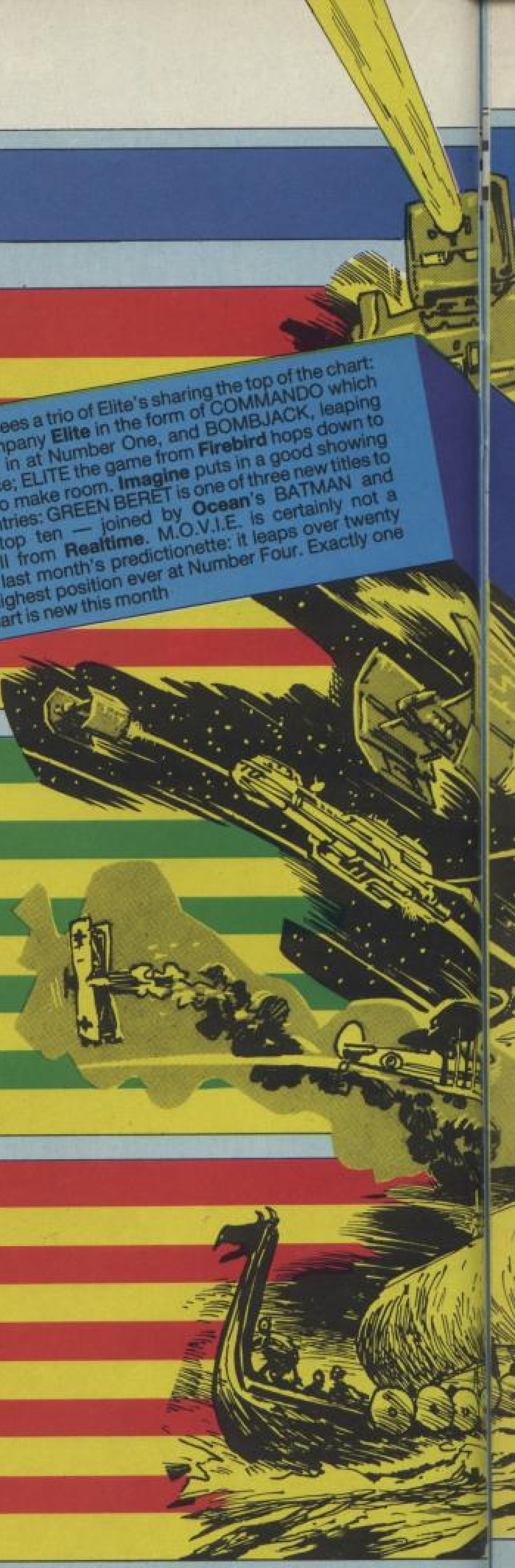
TOP 30 FOR JULY

1(1) COMMANDO **Elite**
2(—) BOMBJACK **Elite**
3(2) ELITE **Firebird**
4(27) M.O.V.I.E. **Imagine**
5(21) SPELLBOUND **Mastertronic**
6(—) GREEN BERET **Imagine**
7(—) BATMAN **Ocean**
8(5) STARQUAKE **Bubble Bus**
9(—) STARSTRIKE II **Realtime Software**
10 (15) GUNFRIGHT **Ultimate**

The July Hotline sees a trio of Elite's sharing the top of the chart: two from the company **Elite** in the form of COMMANDO which is still firmly dug in at Number One, and BOMBJACK, leaping into second place; ELITE the game from **Firebird** hops down to Number Three to make room. **Imagine** puts in a good showing with two new entries: GREEN BERET is one of three new titles to leap into the top ten — joined by **Ocean**'s BATMAN and STARSTRIKE II from **Realtime**. M.O.V.I.E. is certainly not a wrap, despite last month's predictionette: it leaps over twenty places to its highest position ever at Number Four. Exactly one third of the chart is new this month

11 (10) MATCH DAY **Ocean**
12 (3) EXPLODING FIST **Melbourne House**
13 (4) BACK TO SKOOL **Microsphere**
14 (8) HYPERSPORTS **Imagine**
15 (—) WAY OF THE TIGER **Gremlin Graphics**
16 (—) CYBERUN **Ultimate**
17 (7) SABOTEUR **Durell**
18 (14) SWEEVO'S WORLD **Gargoyle Games**
19 (—) PING PONG **Imagine**
20 (9) GYROSCOPE **Melbourne House**

21 (—) TURBO ESPRIT **Durell**
22 (11) ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
23 (6) FAIRLIGHT **The Edge**
24 (12) SPY Vs SPY **Beyond**
25 (30) LORDS OF MIDNIGHT **Beyond**
26 (—) TAU CETI **CRL**
27 (17) HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER **Vortex**
28 (23) TOMAHAWK **Digital Integration**
29 (19) WINTER GAMES **Epyx/US Gold**
30 (—) QUAZATRON **Hewsons**



Lots of freebie fun is in store for **Phil Martin** of Devon who should be spending a lot of time in front of his computer as he plays with all the new games he'll be choosing as this month's £40 winner of the Hotline draw. Four more ever-so-trendy readers will have sparkly new CRASH hats and T Shirts on the way to them: **Matthew Payne** of Gloucestershire; **Robert Graham** from London; **Michael Cooney who lives in Eire and Christopher Prettejohn** who's from Cornish Pastie land.

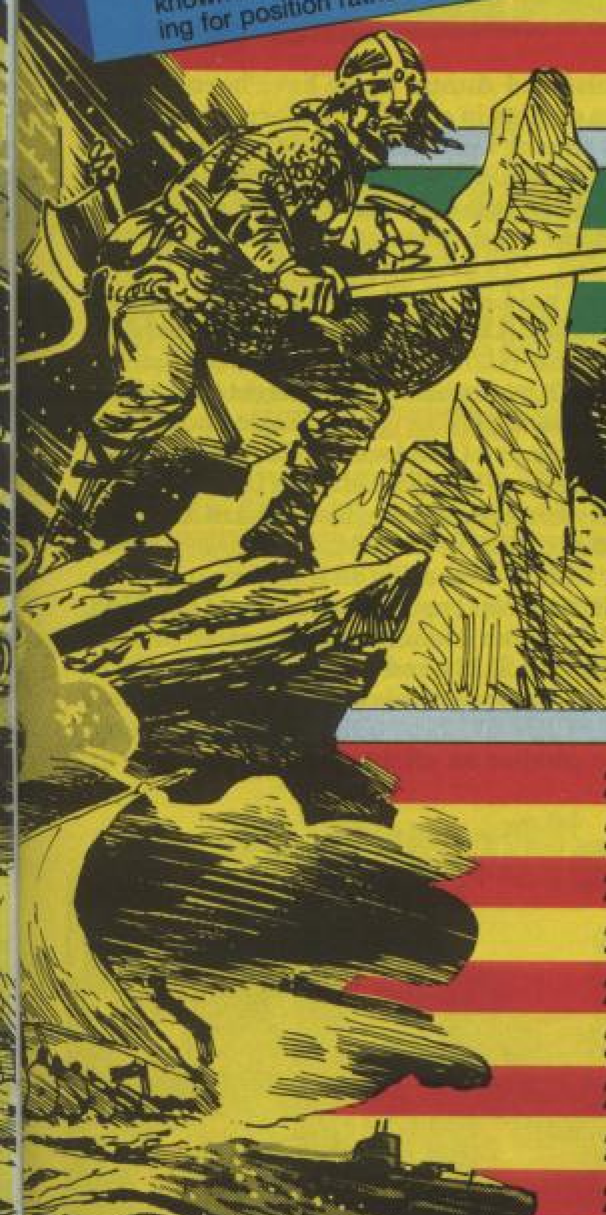
The CRASH HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart — for Spectrum Software, at least. The chart depends entirely on your support and we need your votes in order to produce the analysis of who's playing what.

Nowadays, there's only ONE WAY to submit your votes— and that's by post. Towards the back of the magazine, lurking very close to the competition results bit, you'll find a couple of coupons that you can use to send us your votes. If you're really unkeen on cutting up your magazine, you could always use a photocopy, or copy out the details on the forms onto a plain piece of paper.

Whatever you do, get those voting forms in. Every month we draw out a total of ten winning forms after the charts

ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART

LORD OF THE RINGS leaves the Hotline, but stays in the top slot over here this month, although **Melbourne House**'s LOR stable-mate, THE HOBBIT, takes a small fall. A resurgence of interest in **Gargoyle**'s TIR NA NOG makes it the biggest climber this month, up fourteen places in all, and another 'oldie but goldie' — LORDS OF MIDNIGHT from **Beyond** makes the second biggest clamber. Biggest fall of the month takes BORED OF THE RINGS from the Number Seventeen slot right out of the chart, while five more games bow out to be replaced by five well-known names. Most of the action involves chart regulars jockeying for position rather than dramatic changes.



1 *(1)* LORD OF THE RINGS **Melbourne House**
2 *(4)* FAIRLIGHT **The Edge**
3 *(8)* SPELLBOUND **Mastertronic**
4 *(16)* LORDS OF MIDNIGHT **Beyond**
5 *(3)* SWORDS AND SORCERY **PSS**
6 *(9)* DUN DARACH **Gargoyle Games**
7 *(5)* MARSPORT **Gargoyle Games**
8 *(10)* RED MOON **Level 9**
9 *(2)* THE HOBBIT **Melbourne House**
10 *(15)* DOOMDARK'S REVENGE **Beyond**
11 *(6)* FOURTH PROTOCOL **Century/Hutchinson**
12 *(7)* ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
13 *(13)* SHADOWFIRE **Beyond**
14 *(26)* TIR NA NOG **Gargoyle Games**
15 *(20)* SHERLOCK **Melbourne House**
16 *(22)* GREMLINS **Adventure International**
17 *(14)* WORM IN PARADISE **Level 9**
18 *(11)* FRANKIE **Ocean**
19 *(29)* THEIR FINEST HOUR **Century**
20 *(28)* SPIDERMAN **Adventure International**
21 *(19)* ENIGMA FORCE **Beyond**
22 *(12)* ADRIAN MOLE **Level 9/Mozaic**
23 *(—)* DRAGONTORC **Hewsons**
24 *(—)* OUT OF THE SHADOWS **Mizar**
25 *(—)* EMERALD ISLE **Level 9**
26 *(—)* MINDSHADOW **Activision**
27 *(—)* SUBSUNK **Firebird**
28 *(—)* URBAN UPSTART **Richard Shepherd**
29 *(18)* ROBIN OF SHERWOOD **Adventure International**
30 *(25)* AVALON **Hewsons**

Alan Reid from Bonny Scotland — Glasgow to be precise — will be receiving the attentions of Aunt Aggie along with forty pounds worth of games software for being the first out of the hat in this month's draw. CRASH hats and T Shirts should be soon be basking in the sun, adorning the forms of: **David Gorton** of Blackburn; **Ian Bowater** of Warley; **Adrian Youell**, who's a regular hotline contributor hailing from Essex and lastly, but by no means leastly, **Duncan Hardy** — a Norwich lad.

have been compiled, five for each chart, and prizes go whizzing off to the lucky senders of those forms. The first form out of the sack of Hotline votes, like the first one to come out of the Adventure voting box, wins its sender £40 worth of software of his or her choice. And a CRASH T Shirt, of course.

The next four voting slips for each chart, that's eight voters in all, win a T Shirt and Cap. Don't miss out on your chance to win all these goodies for the cost of a 17p stamp and the time it takes to put pen and your opinions to paper. CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL are what we call the giant boxes that your votes go into, and they can be reached via PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

GATHER UP THE POS[...]
OWNING A MYSTICAL S[...]

Watch as your collection of Posters grows every month





This month Guru Denise and Auntie Aggie have been working overtime. They've been coming in early in the morning, performing strange dances and singing weird incantations to the dawn to raise the power of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER so that it may work its magic for those of you who are members of the elite group whose names and addresses appear on Guru D's computer.

And their efforts have paid off handsomely. Along with the JOURNAL OF MYSTICAL AFFAIRS this month, owners of a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER will be able to complete a special HOLY TEAR OFF COUPON which allows them to save £2.00 on Mirrorsoft's latest game, BIGGLES. A Biggles poster will also be included with their copy of this issue of CRASH and if the power of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER wins through, they may well also get a poster from Mikro-Gen — a piece of Oli Artwork in the form of an A3 EQUINOX. An A3 PYRACURSE poster from Hewson's is on the cards, too.

And of course there's a special competition in the JOURNAL OF MYSTICAL AFFAIRS: the winner is to be treated to a day out at CRASH TOWERS. T Shirts and jog suits are on offer as prizes an' all. Isn't it about time you made sure you had the power of a MYSTERY SUBSCRIBER NUMBER fighting for you? There's some attractive goodies on offer to tempt you. . . .

BETTER THAN PREMIUM BONDS



CRASH SMASHES

A compilation of four CRASH Smashes — SPY HUNTER, NIGHT GUNNER, DUN DARACH and ALIEN 8. Normally on sale for £9.95, this tape represents excellent value at the full price, but for completely free can't be a bad deal. Need we say more?



CRASH BINDER

A blue, hardback folder with the CRASH logo tastefully applied in silver on the the cover and spine. Ideal for keeping a dozen copies of your favourite magazine in pristine condition — just slot them into the special guides and they stay there firm and safe. On sale through Mail Order for £4.50, but totally free if you choose to have this particular pressie with your MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER

MORE POWERFUL THAN RAFFLE TICKETS

SAY "Nya Boo" to softies



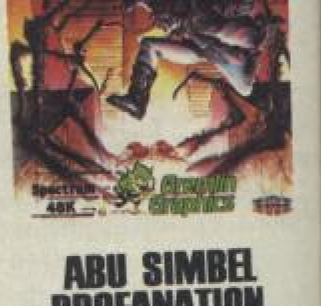
POTTY PIGEON

It's a hard life being a pigeon, especially if your name is Percy and you're potty. You've just become a daddy and a nestful of hungry chicks demand an endless supply of tasty worms. Not that easy to find, are worms. There are killer cars, planes and enemy birds to contend with. Just be thankful for the energy giving Mayflies that can be chomped to boost stamina. We looked at the game in issue 12, and awarded it 70% overall.



METABOLIS

The nasty alien Kremins have changed everyone into animals. Everyone except you — their transformer rays didn't quite work when they tried to make you a bird, so you have the brain of a man and the body of a budgie. Can you save the rest of humanity by finding the healing serum hidden deep within the Kremin's lair? Also reviewed in Issue 20, METABOLIS was awarded 87% overall.



ABU SIMBEL PROFANATION

Another game from Dinamic in Spain. Cast as Johnny Jones, an explorer in the mould of Indigo Jones, you have fallen foul of a pharoah's curse. The only way to escape the dire effects of the spell is to penetrate the tomb of Abu Simbel, and reach the mortuary chamber. A tricky game to play indeed — you'll need every one of the ten lives supplied . . . Another issue 19 game, this time one which won an overall rating of 78%

ITIVE BENEFITS OF SUBSCRIBER NUMBER!

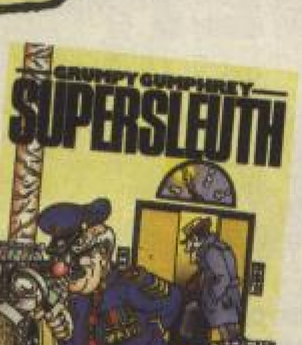
Guaranteed Biologically inactive!

This month, MELBOURNE HOUSE kindly offered a set of their complete works for the Spectrum to Guru Denise, and once again her subscription computer did weird and wonderful things, spitting out a name. That name belongs to the owner of MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER 210951 — a certain C CLARKE of Enfield in Middlesex. If you own a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER, maybe you could get lucky next munf!

NOT YET A MEMBER OF THE ELITE GROUP OF MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER OWNERS?

Put things right with a cheque to Guru Denise and reap the benefits of MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER ownership. This month, by special arrangement with GREMLIN GRAPHICS, people applying for a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER (enclosing the appropriate bribe in the form of a cheque made payable to NEWSFIELD LTD) can choose to receive a FREE BINDER or a FREE COPY of the CRASH SMASH compilation tape or TWO FREE GAMES chosen from the selection on this page!

Not a bad deal, eh folks? Fill in the application form if you are tempted, whizz off your cheque or postal order and sit back and wait for the power of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER to start working for you!



GRUMPY GUMPHREY SUPERSLEUTH

Take on the role of a harrassed store detective, with a list of tasks to perform during the course of a working day. Rampaging criminals, ducks and gorillas get in your way and have to be taken care of. Fail to keep the store manager happy, and it's the sack for you. Can you guide Gumphrey to success? 86% overall in Issue 23.

No tiresome stains!



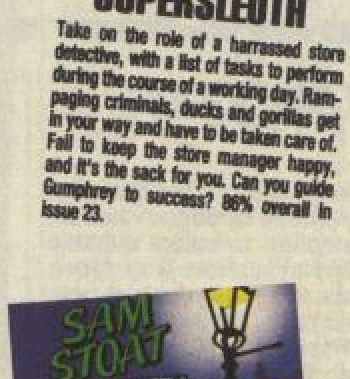
MONTY ON THE RUN

A CRASH Smash in Issue 20, this platform game sees the heroic Monty on the lam from Scudmore Prison. Monty's free and dashes to catch the Channel Ferry which will take him to a life of leisure far from the long arm of the law. If he makes it on time and has the right five items from the Freedom Kit . . . Full details of the game appear on Page 12 of Issue 20 in case you'd like to read more about this 94% Smash.



ROCCO

Awarded 70% overall in Issue 19 (a collector's item in itself), no self-respecting boxing fan should be without this four-round boxing simulation produced in Spain by Dinamic and sold over here in Blighty by Gremlin. Defeat the four opponents ranged against you, and it's time to wear the World Champ's belt!



SAM STOAT SAFEBREAKER

Playing a rodent robber, you're on the trail of a fabulous diamond. Steal the gem and you can retire for ever, a very rich stoat indeed. BUT there's a range of nasties to cope with, including nasty gnomes, bloodthirsty bats and of course the policeman. 68% overall in Issue 15.

MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER APPLICATION FORM

Gosharootie Guru D! I must get on the bandwaggon — this MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER wheeze could change my life. Therefore I enclose my £15 seeing as I live in the UK (£22.00 if I am a European person), and I've ticked the boxes below to indicate the pressie I'd like to receive.

Have a chat with that computer thingy you use to keep track of the personalised MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS and convince it to give me one, starting with Issue Number: ....

I am commonly known as .....

....

And I usually live at ....

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POST CODE ....

so please send my copies of CRASH, JOURNAL OF MYSTICAL AFFAIRS and freebies to me there.

Tick two

- ☐ ABU SIMBEL/PROFANATION
- ☐ METABOLIS
- ☐ MONTY ON THE RUN
- ☐ POTTY PIGEON
- ☐ ROCCO
- ☐ SAM STOAT SAFEBREAKER
- ☐ GRUMPY GUMPHREY

OR tick one

- ☐ CRASH SMASHES
- ☐ CRASH BINDER

GURU DENISE, HOME OF THE MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

FRONTLINE



STRANGER ROADS THAN THIS

The Frontline Forum has been dropped for this issue — there's no shortage of letters, but there just isn't the space to do them justice. Keep writing in though . . . I've been promised a Forum spot for the August issue. Meanwhile, there are three interesting games for you to have a look at: *Theatre Europe* has been long in arriving but the final version has made it worth the wait; *Iwo Jima*, another title from PSS, means the lion's share of this month's FRONTLINE is given over to the Coventry Crew, but the last game, ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE'S *The Force* is perhaps the most interesting.

Reading the review should give you a clear indication of my opinion of *The Force*, but however well this game has been designed, it's a good sign generally that new ideas are being explored in strategy games. I'm not advocating the end of historical simulations (or conventional ones for that matter) but a little more variety wouldn't hurt.

In coventional games, companies have explored many kinds of simulation. It would be interesting if a software company licensed some of these titles and converted them to the Spectrum. For instance, *Dark Nebula*, GDW's space exploration and combat game is a little long in the tooth now, but it would make a great computer game. Somebody wrote in this month and suggested the old Steve Jackson Games *Ogre* and *GEV* as candidates for conversion. I agree entirely. There is a massive list of possible game subjects for the interested Managing Director. Now all we need is an interested MD . . .

And finally — after last month's suggestion in the Forum, I've included a new rating — OPPONENT. This is a percentage rating of how good the computer opponent is on the basis of a few (hard fought) games. On with the reviews . . .

THEATRE EUROPE

Producer: PSS
Retail Price: £9.95
Author: Alan Steel

Theatre Europe. The very mention of the term conjures images of CND banners, argumentative politicians and a barren, nightmarish wasteland where life as we know it has ceased to be. This is what this game is about: the grim reality of a nuclear holocaust. Before those of you with strong feelings start to argue the points of mixing the horrific consequences of war and computer games, the object of *Theatre Europe* is to avoid any sort of nuclear confrontation — or at least to demonstrate how such a conflict could never be won.

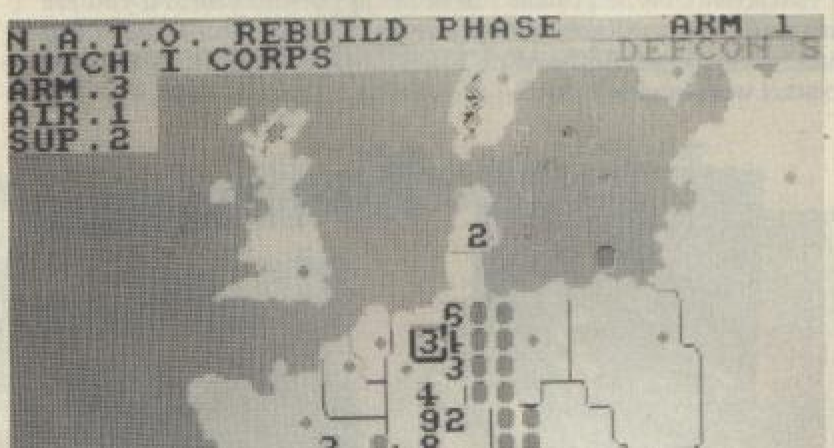
The game offers options for a single player to take on the computer, a two payer head-to-head or a demo version where the computer plays itself. The latter option is very interesting and quite frightening. If you buy this game I strongly recommend you sit down and watch what happens!

Although this is essentially a war game it uses a series of screens to depict the action in a very atmospheric way. There is also an arcade action sequence which may be incorporated by shoot em up fans or ignored by serious wargamers.

If the arcade option is chosen, you are asked to select a battle once combat is under way. Move the cursor over the desired unit, and a picture of a plain with a city in the background is presented with aeroplanes, helicopters and tanks moving about. A target cursor is placed under your control in similar style to *Missile Command* and this is used to destroy the enemy. At the bottom of the screen icons depict different kinds of weaponry. It's a good feature to have, as the process of coordinating your defences becomes more complex and logical.

Your performance in the arcade sequence plays a major part in the game, as it is taken into consideration in arriving at a strength factor that decides the fate of forces elsewhere: doing badly in this phase results in severe losses all round.

Once you've decided whether or not to take the action screens, the forces you would like to command need to be chosen, either the Warsaw Pact or NATO. Special units are made available to the Warsaw Pact: the 1st Airborne Army which can be flown directly behind enemy lines, and the 1st Amphibious Army which can move over the sea to a tactical attack point.

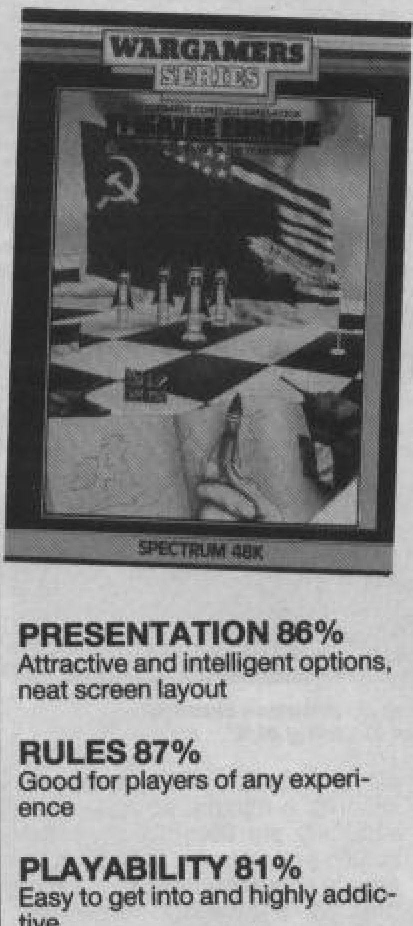


The conspicuous looking blobs stretching down the map are blood crazed Warsaw Pact armies. All the western forces have their Arm level displayed and are peacefully pre-occupied performing parachute displays and such. The tension mounts.

Next, one of the three levels of play must be chosen. Level One plays a totally conventional war game and, unless provoked, does not use the nuclear or chemical option, whilst Levels Two and Three see the computer using nuclear and chemical options to prevent you winning the game. Level three plays a highly intelligent and unpredictable game, and nuclear escalation on this level is usually enormous.

With the level selected, a detailed map of Europe and Western Russia (including Moscow) is presented showing mountain ranges, capital cities, country borders and all the armed forces of both sides. It is time to move your units. Place the cursor over the desired unit, press fire and move the cursor to the place where you want the unit to end up. You can only move one character space at a time and the unit moves as soon as you press the fire button again.

Once all unit moves have been decided, the attack phase follows. This time, position the cursor over the enemy unit you wish to attack. Any amount of your units can attack a single enemy army, but once a unit is sent into battle it cannot be halted until the phase is over.
When the attacking moves have been set up, the ENTER key starts the fighting. If the action screen option has been chosen the computer asks the player to select a battle, whereupon the on screen action happens. If the action screens aren't operational, the battle is decided on merits of air superiority, supplies and armament.
After the battle, units can be rebuilt with somewhat scant supplies. First, a quantity of armament supplies can be issued to the more desperate forces using the cursor to select units and the fire button to indicate the quantity of supplies to be allocated. Similarly, air support supplies may be allocated. The rebuilding schedule needs to be planned carefully — once a supply is sent it cannot be reclaimed.
After rebuilding you move on to the air phase. This is to determine how to use your air command during the next turn. Reserve air units can be accessed, but they are very limited and have to be used sensibly. Several options for allocating air reserves are available, some essential and some tactical.
Essential options are air power (the most important), counter air strikes and reconnaissance. Other options include interdiction, assault breakers, deep strike and iron snake.
Counter air strikes are attacks on enemy airfields and bases; interdiction is where planes are sent behind enemy lines to attack enemy supply and movement networks. Care has to be taken when using this option since it carries the risk of setting off a retaliatory nuclear strike. The other three are, respectively, an attack on a single unit, a strike into enemy territory, and an attack on railways to disable enemy reinforcements.
The most controversial part of the program involves the use of chemical and nuclear weapons. There is an option — Special Mission — which allows the player to set off a strategic chemical or nuclear launch. A chemical launch is automatically targeted on an enemy supply city. A special readout gives you the details and expected results, and reports on the outcome of the attack. This mission carries the risk of an enemy nuclear response.
A strategic nuclear attack involves some pretty tense moments the first few times it's used. When you first switch to nuclear mode you are given 30 seconds to ring a phone number and obtain a special authorisation code. This is a real number, contactable 24 hours a day.
The code number are gives direct control over all targeting and warheads. There are three separate settings: Standby, to which the game reverts if you decide against a launch; Strategic Launch, where a single nuclear strike can be targeted ; and finally Fire-Plan, a full-scale strike. Targeting a single nuclear or chemical launch is alarmingly simple. You are given control of a cursor to position over the desired target. Press fire and the rest is done automatically.
When under enemy nuclear attack, the launch is detected and a target cursor follows the progress of the enemy missile. If your Reflex system is operative, your forces automatically launch a strike of similar size. There is nothing you can do but watch the targets being destroyed in a sequence of graphic screens.
As the game is played, it becomes increasingly obvious that the war cannot be won with nuclear weapons.
This is a brilliant game which offers more than the usual run-of-the-mill war game via its tense action screens and gripping atmosphere. The arcade sequences mean that arcade players could well become interested, and the simplistic playability means that novice war gamers can get into this with ease. Wargame purists might become rather bored by the rather superficial gameplay and the action screens, but it's well worth buying if you do have an interest in wargaming — and the future.



PRESENTATION 86%
Attractive and intelligent options, neat screen layout

RULES 87%
Good for players of any experience

PLAYABILITY 81%
Easy to get into and highly addictive

GRAPHICS 83%
Atmospheric and neat

AUTHENTICITY 89%
Lacks details but the general flow is realistic

OPPONENT 88%
The computer takes advantage of every weakness

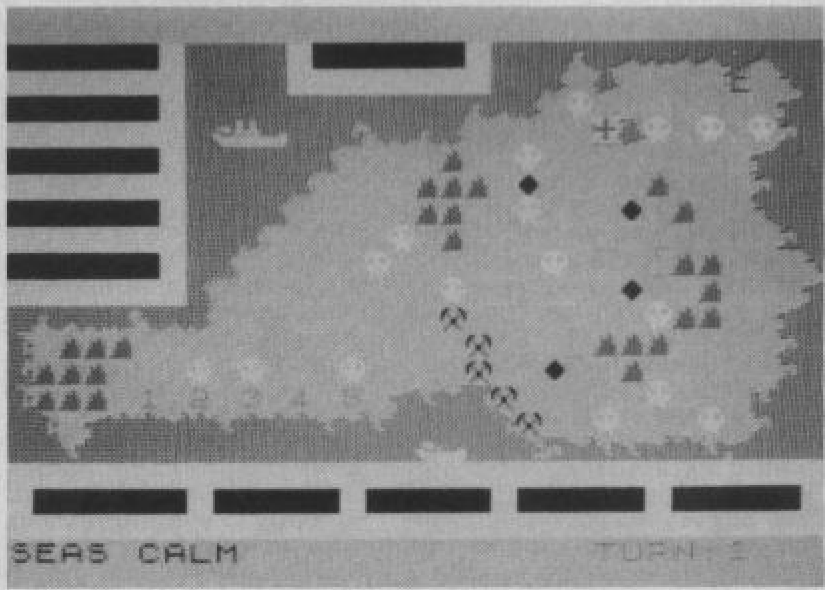
VALUE FOR MONEY 85%
Well worth it

OVERALL 84%
A thought provoking picture of a possible future

IWO JIMA

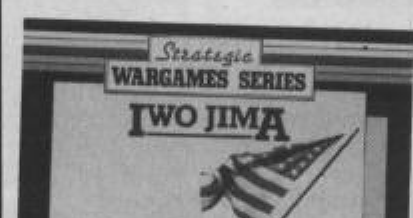
Producer: PSS
Retail Price: £7.95
Author: John Bethell

This reconstruction of one of the bloodiest battles of World War II's South Pacific campaign is the latest in the **Strategic Wargames** series PSS began with *Falklands 82*. It uses a system similar to that of its predecessor with full map display at all times, five levels of difficulty, phased order sequences and a game design that follows the PSS philosophy of 'playable' games — games that do not take more than a couple of sessions to complete.



Though small, the map in IWO JIMA is a definite improvement to the one in FALKLANDS. The black boxes are the option and information windows

As he did with *Falklands*, the author has willingly sacrificed some authenticity for the sake of playability. There is logic to this move. A detailed simulation of the conflict would definitely have strained the limits of a Microdrive-based game, let alone one on cassette. The game still tries to cover the battle in reasonable depth, however.
The package is simple, consisting of a small cassette case and a booklet of instructions. Loading takes no more than a couple of minutes and once the program is in memory, the first of the aesthetic improvements to Bethell's game system becomes obvious. Everything is menu driven: the player only ever needs to use three keys. In a wargame, there's no reason why this cannot always be the case, as the increase in the speed of interaction between player and computer allows straightforward implementation of a strategy.
All the game functions, from setting the difficulty level to choosing a unit to order and the orders themselves (Move, Attack, Land, Pass) are simply selected from information windows and confirmed. All relevant information on the unit currently selected is also displayed in an information window using an abstract points system. Units have an aggression factor, defence factor, movement factor and a range factor, all of which affect combat ability.
The player (as there is no two player option) must always take the side of the American forces, with the objective of eliminating all the enemy units between turns 32 and 36 (depending on the difficulty level set). The enemy may fortify positions, make suicide attacks if a unit is about to be wiped out and launch air attacks against the carrier force bringing reinforcements and artillery support to your units. As long as the offshore fleet is well defended, weather permitting, you may launch air strikes against the enemy.
Initially, the player must establish a beach head with the first of his units (reinforcements arrive throughout the game) and there are six beaches which may act as landing sites. Many of them are penned in by minefields and so a careful choice must be made as to which units land where. There is no restriction on the number of beaches that may be used, so long as units are not stacked in the same area.
That really sums up the game. Getting into *Iwo Jima* is an extremely simple process, no doubt because it was designed with beginners in mind. And this brings up the question of why PSS include arcade sequences on their more 'serious' games and yet exclude them from these introductory efforts. Not that I am advocating their use at all — but it does seem rather strange. ▶



There is some animation in the game, however. Air strikes by either side are rather crudely depicted by a simple aircraft silhouette that passes over the target area.
There are faults with the system. Air strikes can only be called either after an attack by ground forces or by a unit that deliberately tries to attack whilst out of range. This really could have been made neater. The limited intelligence used in the game seems to be affected only by proximity and not by terrain. Because the designer has decided to make the whole island visible during play, the display size of the units is very small indeed and when several units are in close proximity, this can lead to confusion.

I can see this game appealing to those who feel daunted by some other companies' more complex offerings and would still like to venture into the area of wargaming. I must stress that its appeal for the more experienced player is likely to be very limited. Because of the way the author has changed historical details in the name of playability, anybody looking for an accurate means of simulating the battle is likely to be very disappointed with this game.
For all that, the final result is playable and PSS are not demanding that you break the bank to obtain a copy. Someone just looking for a way to pass a couple of hours at the keyboard without wanting to risk a migraine may get something from *Iwo Jima*. For anyone else, steer clear. It probably won't be worth it.

PRESENTATION 72%
Well laid out instructions but the map looks slightly crowded

RULES 67%
Great for the beginner but apart from the historical notes (which could have been longer but are still welcome), there is little for the more demanding player

PLAYABILITY 68%
Easy to get into and good; fast interaction makes the game a doddle to play.

GRAPHICS 57%
A crisp map of *Iwo Jima* is let down by poor unit markers and terrain features

AUTHENTICITY 48%
Too much has been left out for playability's sake for this to be considered authentic, but perhaps beginners can overlook this

OPPONENT 41%
Doesn't put up much of a fight

VALUE FOR MONEY 59%
Cheap, but experienced players would master the game before long.

OVERALL 60%
When I first saw this game on the Commodore, I didn't like it at all. However, its good points have grown on me. This percentage has been given with the beginner in mind.

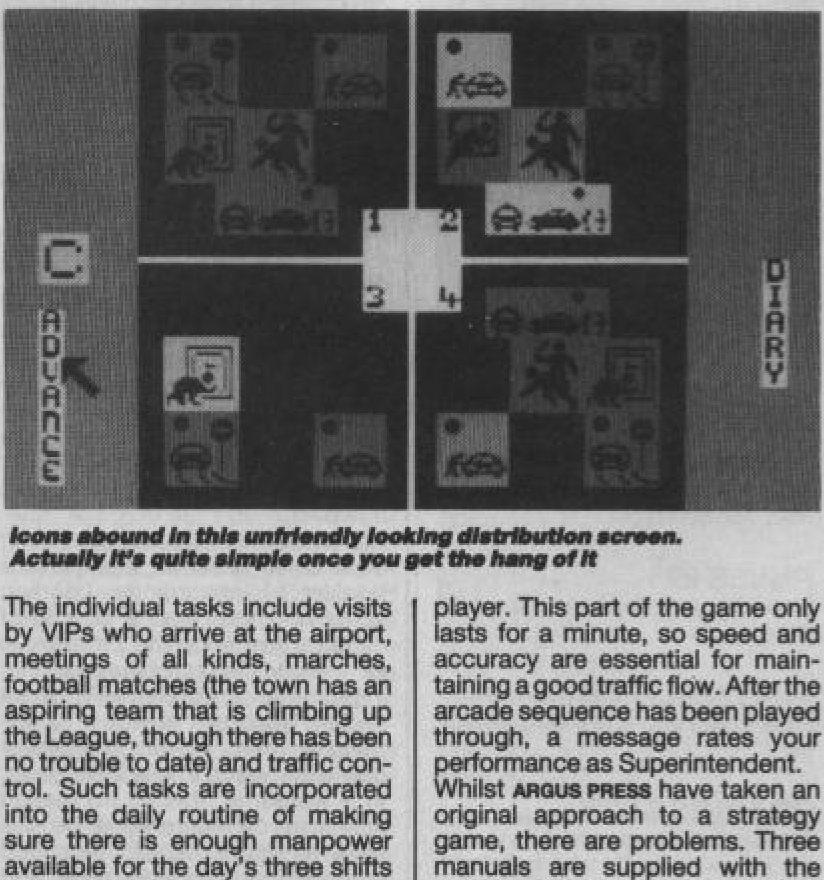
THE FORCE

Producer: Argus Press Software
Retail Price: £9.95
Author: Designed by Ron Harris and Paul Clansey, programmed by Concept Software

The Force represents an unusual approach to strategy gaming. Instead of being a military commander in charge of winning a battle against an easily identifiable foe by the process of eliminating the opposition's forces, the player's task is to run a town's constabulary. This presents far more of a challenge to the player, as the police are a peaceful force in a generally peaceful society and the 'enemy' is not easily observable.
The supposedly typical town of Middletown has been created as the backdrop for the strategy. It has many of the features of a 'typical' small city, complete with urban, suburban and residential housing; centres of entertainment; industrial estates and the unfortunate but realistic run-down, underdeveloped areas. Middletown also has its own airport.

Across the town are four police stations. Each has its own particular equipment and policing style. Your job is to effectively control and co-ordinate these four stations with the aim of keeping down crime whilst simultaneously creating a good community atmosphere.

the icon for the type of unit you want (foot, motorised and so on) and positioning it over the area that needs covering. The diary for the week ahead needs to be checked while deploying forces. Units selected to police the events in the diary have to be taken from the correct station, day and shift. The computer will not allow for error here. A message window at the bottom of the screen tells you how the events go, and tells you of any other crimes that happen during the week.
The statistics for the week may be examined to help a strategy for the coming week to be devised so you can try to meet the changing requirements of each area of the city. At the end of the week a mini-arcade section puts the player in control of the traffic computer. As cars and trucks move along a perimeter road and venture towards the centre of the city, everything has to be kept running smoothly. The priority on a set of lights is toggled by moving a cursor over them and pressing fire — the lights remain green for traffic flowing in the selected direction until they're changed by the



Icons abound in this unfriendly looking distribution screen. Actually it's quite simple once you get the hang of it

The individual tasks include visits by VIPs who arrive at the airport, meetings of all kinds, marches, football matches (the town has an aspiring team that is climbing up the League, though there has been no trouble to date) and traffic control. Such tasks are incorporated into the daily routine of making sure there is enough manpower available for the day's three shifts and, of course, throughout the week.
Gameplay is fairly straightforward, as the whole simulation is icon driven. An overall view of the town may be split into any of four more localised views, with a police station at the centre of each. These are shown in pictorial form during the deployment of units. They may later be viewed as collections of colour coded icons which show the crime level in the locality. The lighter the colour, the higher the crime rate in an area.
Units are deployed by selecting

player. This part of the game only lasts for a minute, so speed and accuracy are essential for maintaining a good traffic flow. After the arcade sequence has been played through, a message rates your performance as Superintendent.
Whilst ARGUS PRESS have taken an original approach to a strategy game, there are problems. Three manuals are supplied with the game — one is a local information guide, another is a training manual suggesting strategies and guidelines for the many problems that might arise, and the third manual explains how to interact with the computer. None of them are particularly good. They constantly stress the difficulty of the situation but offer little in the way of a coherent guide to play. Strategies are expounded upon in reasonable detail, but the actual instructions for play are sloppy, unclear and incomplete. No proper explanation for the meaning of some of the icons appears, for instance. A first-time player will not get into the game very quickly.
The screen layout is good — it's bright, informative and intelligently constructed. The traffic control section appears to be an excuse to add variety to gameplay without any consideration for the internal logic of the game. It is supposed to represent changes to the programming of the traffic computer, but even if a Superintendent had to be a qualified programmer it is unlikely that he would need to implement changes in real time. Another approach may have been better in this case.
These are however, small niggles. The real problem with *The Force* is that there isn't enough game there. Whilst it's subtle to have an 'unseen enemy', what results is very abstract play consisting of not much more than shoving a few icons around a screen. I sometimes felt that it was rather like shooting in the dark. Granted, this is where the challenge is supposed to lie but it's all too much of the same for me. There are no logistics to consider, no shape to the course of the game and never any obvious signs of progress.
There is no precedent by which to judge the authenticity of the game and I would give ARGUS the benefit of the doubt and say that it appears to be realistic — senior police officers were consulted during the design phase. However, it must be remembered that the simulation is a microcosm of a 'conflict' that is still going on around us. There are no historical notes or papers on Policing in the Eighties ... I remember the authors who published books about the Falklands War before the conflict had even been resolved. The real situation in this case has not come to its conclusion as yet, and consequently, it is rather difficult to judge any kind of conclusion in the game in terms of comparative success or failure. You are only left with extremes. I, for one, am unsatisfied.

PRESENTATION 80%
Good screen layout and attractive packaging

RULES 62%
Plenty of them, but confusing by their omissions in places

PLAYABILITY 64%
Hard to get into at first. Simple but monotonous later

GRAPHICS 66%
Workable and clear but nothing outstanding

AUTHENTICITY 79%
Hard to judge but certainly flawed by the traffic control section

OPPONENT 78%
It certainly is challenging

VALUE FOR MONEY 67%
About as much as you could ask for the game

OVERALL 68%
Interesting subject, but the game fails to live up to expectations

·B·B·B·BOUND TO BE A HIT·

"10 levels of fun make this torture excellent value for money. Nova rating. Definitely one of those 'just another go' games. Game of the month February" – Computer Gamer

"The most compulsive game I've ever played. If you don't buy it you'll never know what you've missed." says Gary Penn, Zzap! 64. Gold Medal Award. 97% overall.

COMMODORE 64 MSX
AMSTRAD SPECTRUM



GOLD MEDAL AWARD

B·B·B·B·BOUNDER···

Gremlin Graphics Software Limited, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423

U.S. GOLD 1986 ALL STAR SOFTWARE

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

A•U•G•U•S•T

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

S•E•P•T•E•M•B•E•R

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6

O•C•T•O•B•E•R

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4



	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

N·O·V·E·M·B·E·R

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

D·E·C·E·M·B·E·R

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



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Since **Mark Jones** made his bid for fame last issue (and was called Ian at the same time), the SCREEN$ have been flooding in to the Gallery at CRASH TOWERS. Keep them coming, and don't forget that RAINBIRD are sponsoring this page, and all the screens that we print are sent to be converted into A3 size full colour screen dumps.

This month, we feature the work of **Richard Lees**, **Graham Galbraith**, **Peter Curran** and **Kevin Jones** and the emphasis is on cartoon style graphics.



Hell-Met

Kevin Jones plays on words with his title and on the sensibilities of his audience with his image which reminds man that he is mortal no matter how much he seeks to protect his body. Whether a human is encased in mediaeval tinplate or futuristic space armour, death comes to all in the end.

Judge Dread

Another thrillsucking fan, Peter Curran provides a colour rendition of Judge Dredd himself, Guardian of the Laws, firm but fair administrator of justice. Dredd appears here as he was drawn for 2000AD by Ron Smith, the very figure of stern authority.





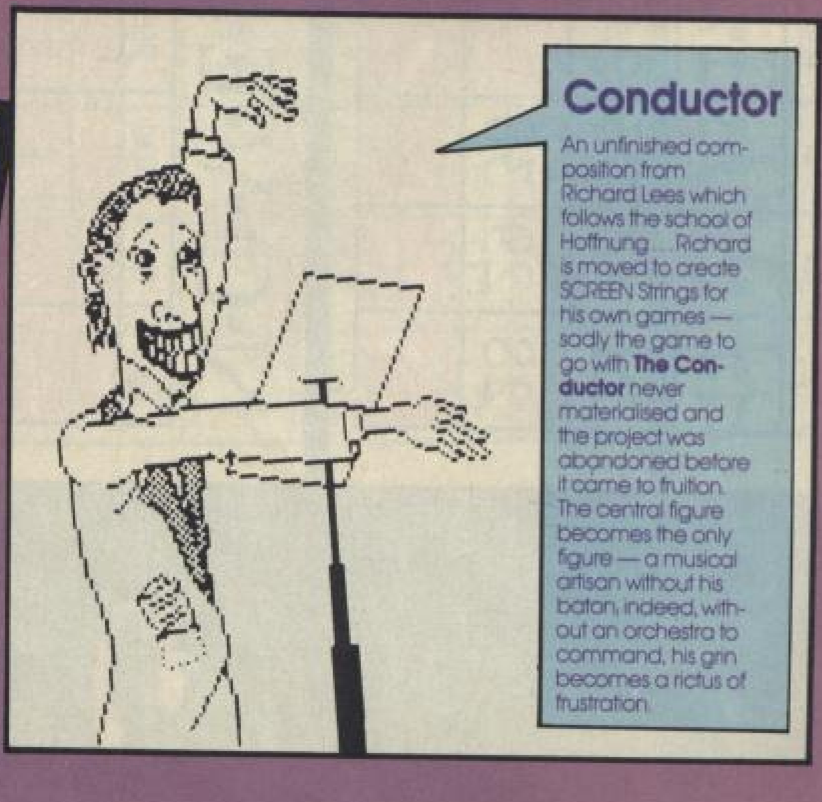
Judge Anderson

Mr Galbraith's economical use of pixels conveys both the glamour and the grind behind the visage of this Law Giver of the future. This monochromatic rendition has an air of gentle menace — Anderson bares her teeth and casts her judicial gaze out of the frame, to one side, looking at a point behind the onlooker's left shoulder. What form of wrong doer lurks in her view? Are her Psi powers working overtime?



Frodo

Another image from the Galbraith stable, this time of the furry-footed Hobbit, Frodo. Hours of painstaking work lie behind this picture, which was built up pixel by pixel using an antiquated drawing utility. The medium used to create the message has strayed onto the screen and the effort expended in the creation of Frodo's likeness carries through into the finished artwork

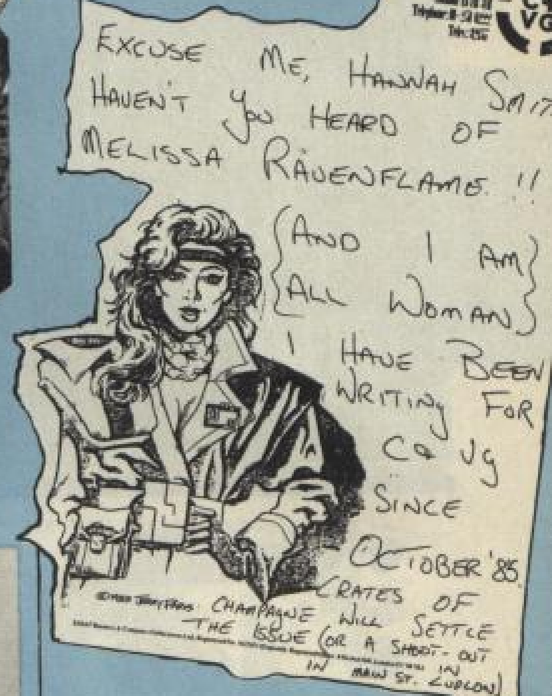


Conductor

An unfinished composition from Richard Lees which follows the school of Hoffnung . . . Richard is moved to create SCREEN Strings for his own games — sadly the game to go with **The Conductor** never materialised and the project was abandoned before it came to fruition. The central figure becomes the only figure — a musical artisan without his baton, indeed, without an orchestra to command, his grin becomes a rictus of frustration.

Hannah Smith's Playing Tips





Following last month's unfair criticism from *Graeme Doc Marten Kidd* concerning the alleged mess in the CRASH office I have made a considerable effort to keep things in their rightful place. In fact I am now the proud owner of a brand new filing cabinet to stop the monthly migration of cassettes from my desk. And anyway, the umbrella wasn't broken thanyouverymuch, Graeme.

Apart from lots of lovely tips to sort through, another exciting development during my first month as Girlie Tipster here at CRASH Towers was my very first threatening letter. Coo, gosh! And it was from another girlie too. Melissa Ravenflame, tipster from C&VG wrote to me, saying in no uncertain terms that unless I back off as rival female tipster and sent her copious amounts of champagne there would be a shoot out in Ludlow main street. Ha!

For a start off, Melissa deary, Ludlow doesn't have a main street, it's too small; and secondly I was rather hoping that the champagne would be coming from you to moi and not vice-versa. Anyway I can see that you have a point. This Tipping business isn't big enough for the both of us, so I am publicly throwing down the perfumed kid-leather glove and hereby dare you to a Girlie Challenge, (name your field of combat: eyeliners at dawn or a bout of mud wrestling if you like). Drag your brazen form to Ludlow and we'll settle the issue once and for all.

As you can see, I've already sorted the bubby out — it's on loan from the Victoria Wines shop which lives at the foot of CRASH Towers — the loser gets to pay for the bubbly and Best Girlie takes it away.

Anyway enough of this and on to . . . The Tips. Top Tipster this month is Richard Hewison for his tips on Heavy on the Magick. Stand by for your £20 worth of Software, Richard Unfortunately, there's no Cartographer of the month award this issue, but that doesn't mean you don't have to send me any more maps.

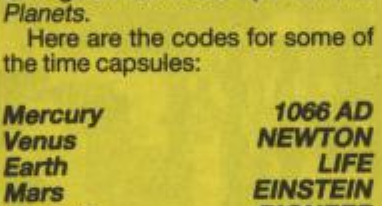


THE PLANETS

Phil Churchyard has been busy again. Apart from the *Alien Highway* and *Pentagram* POKEs he's also given us these tips for *The Planets*.

Here are the codes for some of the time capsules:

Mercury	*1066 AD*
Venus	*NEWTON*
Earth	*LIFE*
Mars	*EINSTEIN*
Jupiter	*PIONEER*



To gain access to the onboard computer use the password *Martech. ACCESS 5012753* stops the meteors shooting at you. I'll be passing on the rest of the tips for *The Planets* provided by Mr Churchyard next month.

ALIEN HIGHWAY

Phil Churchyard has been POKEing away again this month and has sent us these routines to get you through *Alien Highway* with no casualties. There are a number of versions of the game out there apparently, so this set of POKEs may not work on your copy.

```
10 REM Highway loader
20 REM Copyright 1986 Phil
Churchyard
30 CLEAR 65449
40 RESTORE
50 LET weight=1
60 LET tot=0
70 FOR i=50000 TO 50119
80 READ a: LET tot=tot+a*
weight
90 LET weight=weight+1
100 POKE i,a
110 NEXT i
120 IF tot<>906716 THEN
PRINT "ERROR IN
DATA":BEEP 1,0:STOP
130 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0:
CLS
140 PRINT #1;AT 1,4;"Start
Alien Highway tape"
150 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
1000 DATA 33, 182, 92, 1, 58
1001 DATA 0, 205, 232, 25, 205
1002 DATA 118, 195, 205, 118,
195
1003 DATA 62, 221, 50, 43, 95
1004 DATA 33, 152, 201, 34, 44
1005 DATA 95, 33, 140, 195, 17
1006 DATA 170, 255, 1, 59, 0
1007 DATA 237, 176, 201, 221, 33
1008 DATA 0, 91, 17, 17, 0
1009 DATA 175, 55, 205, 86, 5
1010 DATA 221, 33, 0, 91, 33
1011 DATA 203, 92, 195, 115, 8
1012 DATA 62, 237, 50, 217, 252
1013 DATA 33, 75, 160, 34, 218
1014 DATA 252, 33, 171, 252, 17
1015 DATA 0, 128, 1, 137, 0
1016 DATA 237, 176, 33, 0, 128
1017 DATA 34, 224, 252, 33, 207
1018 DATA 255, 34, 38, 253, 195
1019 DATA 217, 252, 33, 221, 255
1020 DATA 17, 113, 255, 1, 8
1021 DATA 0, 237, 176, 195, 60
1022 DATA 255, 62, 201, 50, 244
1023 DATA 153, 195, 171, 135, 0
9999 STOP
```

PENTAGRAM

Mr Churchyard's name crops up yet again. Here's a useful bit of code for *Pentagram* players to key in and run before loading their game . . .

```
10 REM Pentagram Loader
20 REM Copyright 1986 Phil
Churchyard
30 CLEAR 64999
40 RESTORE
50 LET weight=1
60 LET tot=0
70 FOR i=65000 TO 65054
80 READ a: LET tot=tot+a*
weight
90 LET weight=weight+1
100 POKE i,a
110 NEXT i
120 IF tot<>185354 THEN
PRINT "ERROR IN
DATA":BEEP 1,0: STOP
130 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0:
CLS
140 PRINT #;AT 1,6;"Start Pen-
tagram Tape"
150 RANDOMIZE USR 65000
1000 DATA 49, 255, 93, 205, 252
1001 DATA 253, 205, 252, 253,
205
1002 DATA 252, 253, 62, 201, 50
1003 DATA 253, 194, 195, 0, 94
1004 DATA 221, 33, 31, 254, 17
1005 DATA 17, 0, 175, 55, 205
1006 DATA 86, 5, 237, 91, 42
1007 DATA 254, 221, 42, 44, 254
1008 DATA 122, 254, 27, 32, 3
1009 DATA 221, 38, 64, 62, 255
1010 DATA 55, 205, 86, 5, 201
9999 STOP
```

REDHAWK

Kevin Oliver has a tough time in *Redhawk*. You can make his life a bit easier by using these hints sent in by **R. Hellaby** from Sandiacre in Notts.

1) To get a job as a crime reporter, go to the Trumpet News office and read the sign. Ask for 'film'.
2) Get Kevin to wait in the park and when the mugger appears 'get Photo' and then 'say KWAH'. Hit the mugger twice and arrest him.
3) To listen to the police radio go to the library as Redhawk and wait.
4) To get out of jail 'say KWAH'.
5) If you want to search anyone, you must do it as Redhawk, not Kevin.
6) The bomb scare at the power station is a hoax.
7) After arresting the mugger take the photo to the news office and give it to the editor.

Further tips and hints on *Redhawk* would be greatly appreciated.

HEAVY ON THE MAGICK
How To Become A Practicus

There's not much that **Richard Hewison** from Luton in Bedfordshire doesn't know about *Heavy on the Magick*. He must have sent in at least four separate letters keeping us up to date with his progress on the game. For starters though, here's the way to upgrade your magical skills to become a **Practicus**.

Starting in the Room of Misery (level 2, red) Axil must take the Grimoire (that's the book on the right, as the book on the left is in fact covered with poison). Go East into the Sothic Complex, (level 2, yellow). Three consecutive moves north takes you into Trollwynd, (level 3, green).

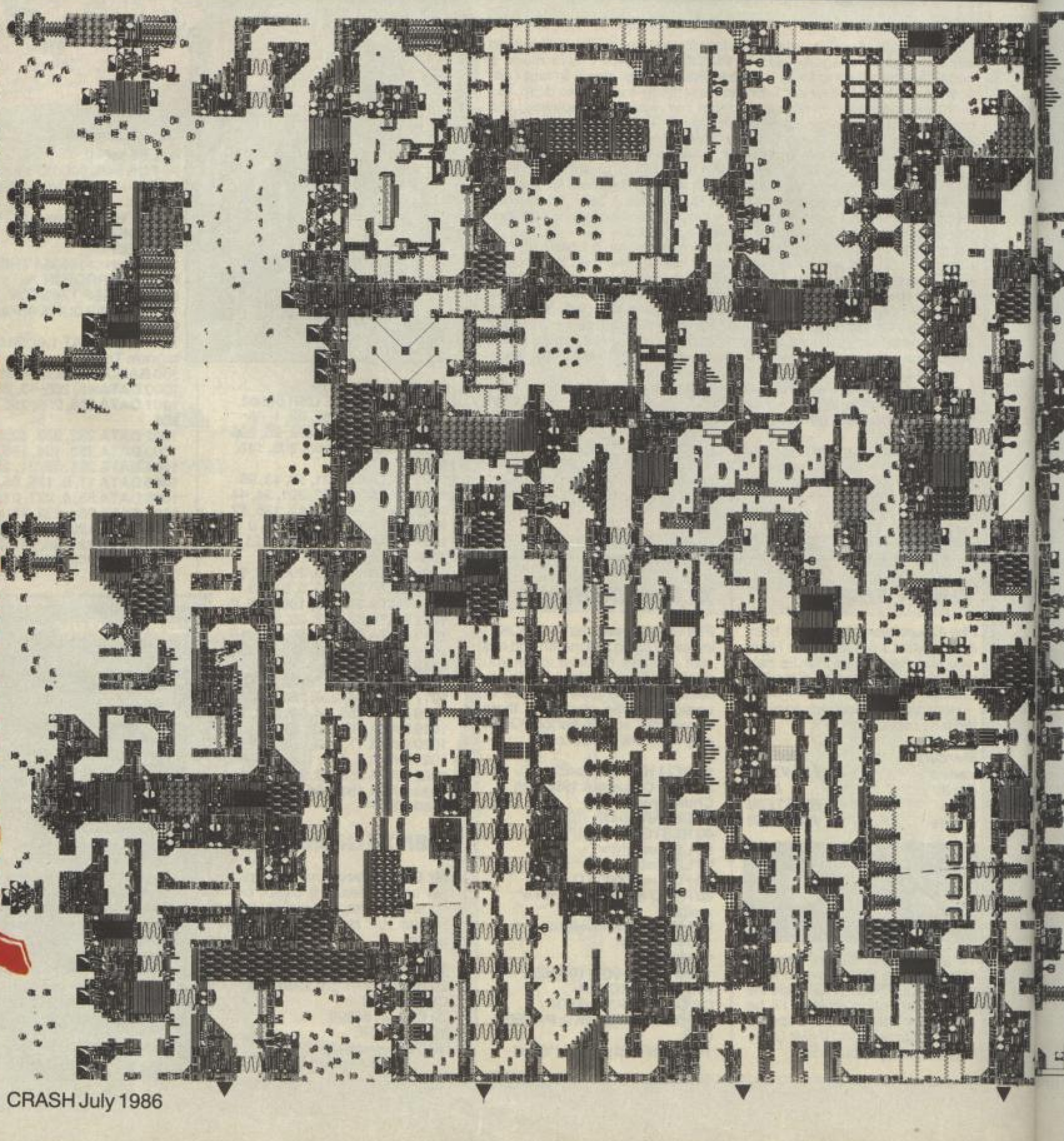
Move east and Blast the troll lurking there until it is dead. Now move SE twice into another part of the Sothic Complex, (level 2, yellow) and pick up the scroll that is lying there. It is a page from the Grimoire and adds the CALL spell to your magical repertoire.

Return NW twice then move North into the Room of Misery — this one's on level 3 and is green. Now move NE and you'll find yourself in a room with a stalactite growing from the ceiling and some nougat on the floor. Go SE. Stomp South three times and West once and Blast this troll until it's dead. Now move SE and Blast another Troll. Take the scroll it was so possessively guarding. This adds the TRANSFUSION spell to your Grimoire.

Now go NW, E, N, N, N, NW, SW back into the Room of Misery on level three (green). The corpse of the Troll you blasted will still be there. Go West, then South and back into the Sothic Complex, (level 2, yellow).

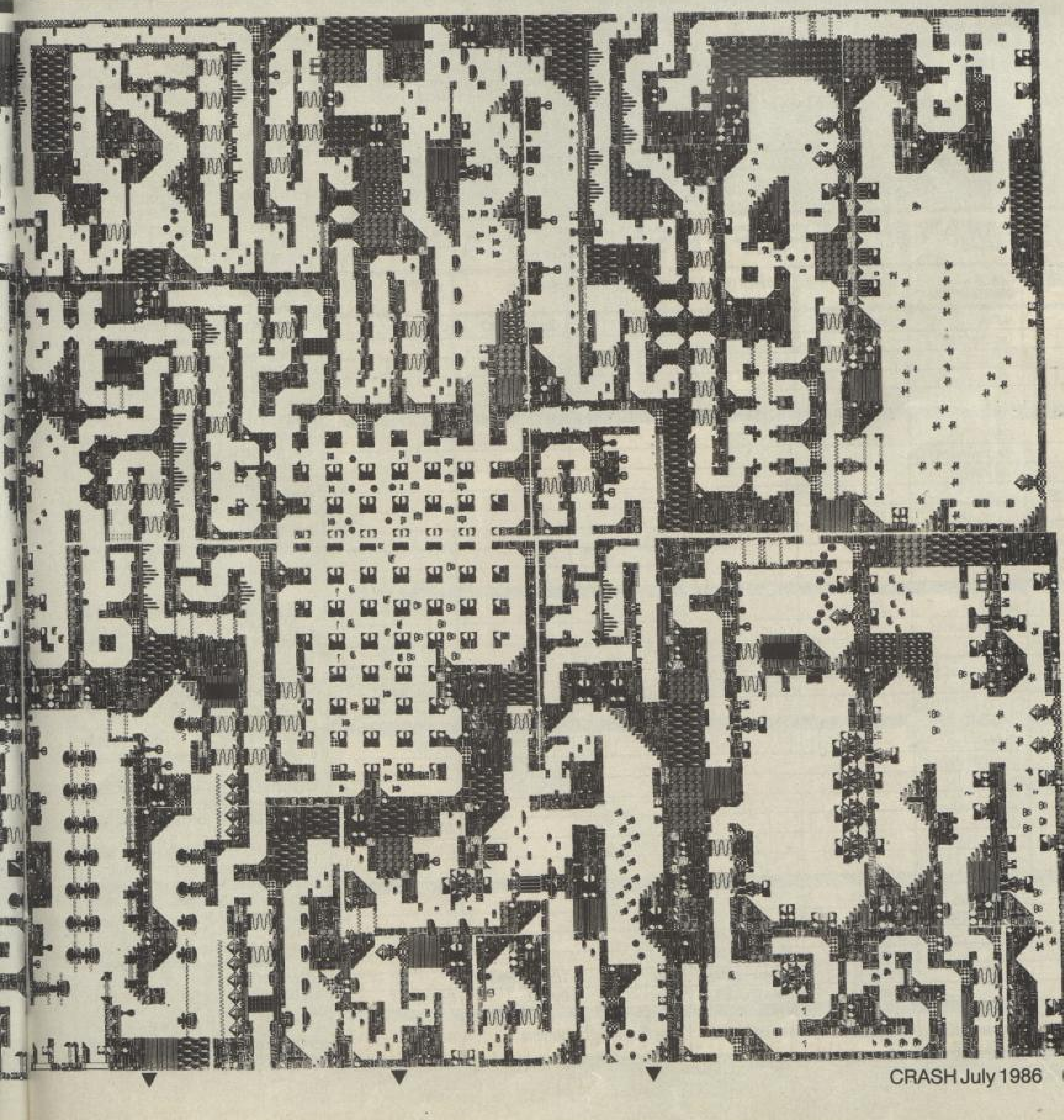
Move east into Morfang, (level 2, cyan). Move East twice more, through Secunda Porta, (level 2, magenta) to a guarded door. It is necessary to CALL Apex the Ogre now. He is a friend and should never be attacked or he can turn very nasty indeed. Say "APEX, DOOR" and he will reply "The word is no word". Say "DOOR,

Tantalus Part Three



SILENCE'' and the door will open. Go North through the door and voila, you have become a Zelator, a second grade magician. The punctuation marks should be copied exactly when talking to Apex, otherwise you get no response.
Now you are ready to be upgraded to a Practicus. From Secunda Ports (level 2, magenta) re-trace your steps to the Trollwynd and collect the key. Now re-trace your steps even further until you are back at the start — the Room of Misery, (level 2, red). Now move West into the Sothic Complex (level 2, yellow) which has a sign hanging on the wall. Go south into the Rook of Hydra, (level 3, Cyan) and then East. Blast the Wyvern until it is dead. Now go SW then East and say to the fountain ''WATER, FALL'' and it will! Now go East twice into the Room of Rains. Drop the key on the table to the right to open the door. Go North into Tertia (level 1, red) and hunt around for the guarded door. When you find it say ''DOOR, LAZA'' to make it open. Enter the door to become Practicus, a third grade magician.
Robin Groat from Edinburgh has come up with a neat tip to bump up Axil's stamina, skill and luck levels to around 99, making him virtually invincible.
Start the game and pick up the Grimoire as usual. Then press 'O' for options. When the options table comes onto the screen, press '5' then any letter followed by break. After a moment the word 'abandoned' appears on the screen. Don't Panic, but start the game again and repeat the process. Every time Axil picks up the Grimoire, his skill levels increase. Keep picking up the Grimoire and saving the position until the level is up to 99. When this happens press 'O' and '5' followed by any letter and BREAK.

When the number '6' is added to the options list, press the '6' key and re-align the status, putting the 99 for stamina and the lowest number back in skill. Now repeat the process again. Keep doing this until all three levels are up to 99. Now you can start the game for real and blast your enemies to your heart's content.



PLAYING TIPS



QUAZATRON

QUAZATRON TIPS

Quazatron was Smashed last month. For anyone who is having problems with all the grappling and the little tin robots that scuttle around the Citadel, Fret no longer: help is at hand. **Steve Turner**, who wrote *Quazatron* has very kindly sent me these tips and hints , which is everso nice of him. I'm going to pass them on, 'cos I'm everso nice too!

Real progress in the game depends on a detailed knowledge of the weapons, shields, ram thrusters, power status and security codes of each opponent that KLP2 meets. If you have already got the game you will also know that after a successful duel the Mecknotech you control gets the pick of the mechanical leftovers.

If the game starts on the green or white level go immediately to the lift and head upwards, as the easy levels of the game are situated at the top of the Citadel. However, if there is an Epsilon Class robot around you should grapple with it as soon as possible because successful battling wins the droid's security devices and provides an extra life for KLP2.

There are many strategies for climbing the Droid social ladder of success. Here is a list of Steve's personal favourite droids with which he likes to grapple (nuff said . . .)

X8 MENIAL DRONE Easy to start off with. If defeated you should take the fast drive.

R6 REPAIR ROBOT The best Robot in the Epsilon security class. Take the power unit and the drive.

R5 REPAIR ROBOT Although a 5, this is an easy grapple. The security class decides the grapple difficulty. This is the most important droid to save until you need a disruptor shield. Grapple with it from a higher class of droid so you are sure of a shield if there is only one around. Once you have the shield then you are able to face the dreaded disruptor droids on the lower levels.

B7 BATTLE DROID Worth stealing all its bits if you can. Try to overwhelmingly win the grapple. Beware bumping it as it has a Ram Thruster that can destroy you instantly. With the Ram Thruster interfaced you can ram almost anything, but watch your power, it depletes very quickly. Ramming with the Ram Thruster is a quick way to kill the droids which ensures that your alert status goes up, giving you bonus points every second.

00 MEDIC DROID A fast little droid. He is the easiest droid from which to win a power boost, a very handy device indeed. It not only adds to any power unit that you possess but also makes you a little faster.

The droids which are highest in status all have powerful bits and pieces. The points to look out for are:

AUTOCANNON The most powerful weapon that can kill droids with disruptor shields. But watch the power.

DISRUPTOR A really useful weapon when mopping up smaller droids.

CORALLOY MARK 2 CHASSIS The Elite chassis.

ULTRAGRAV DRIVE The supreme drive unit.

CYBONIC MARK 2 POWER UNIT The most powerful power unit.

DETECTOR able to show levels with robots still alive. Useful at the end of the Citadel.

Some points are best avoided unless you have a specific use for them. These are:

OVERDRIVE Speeds you up but is heavy on the power.

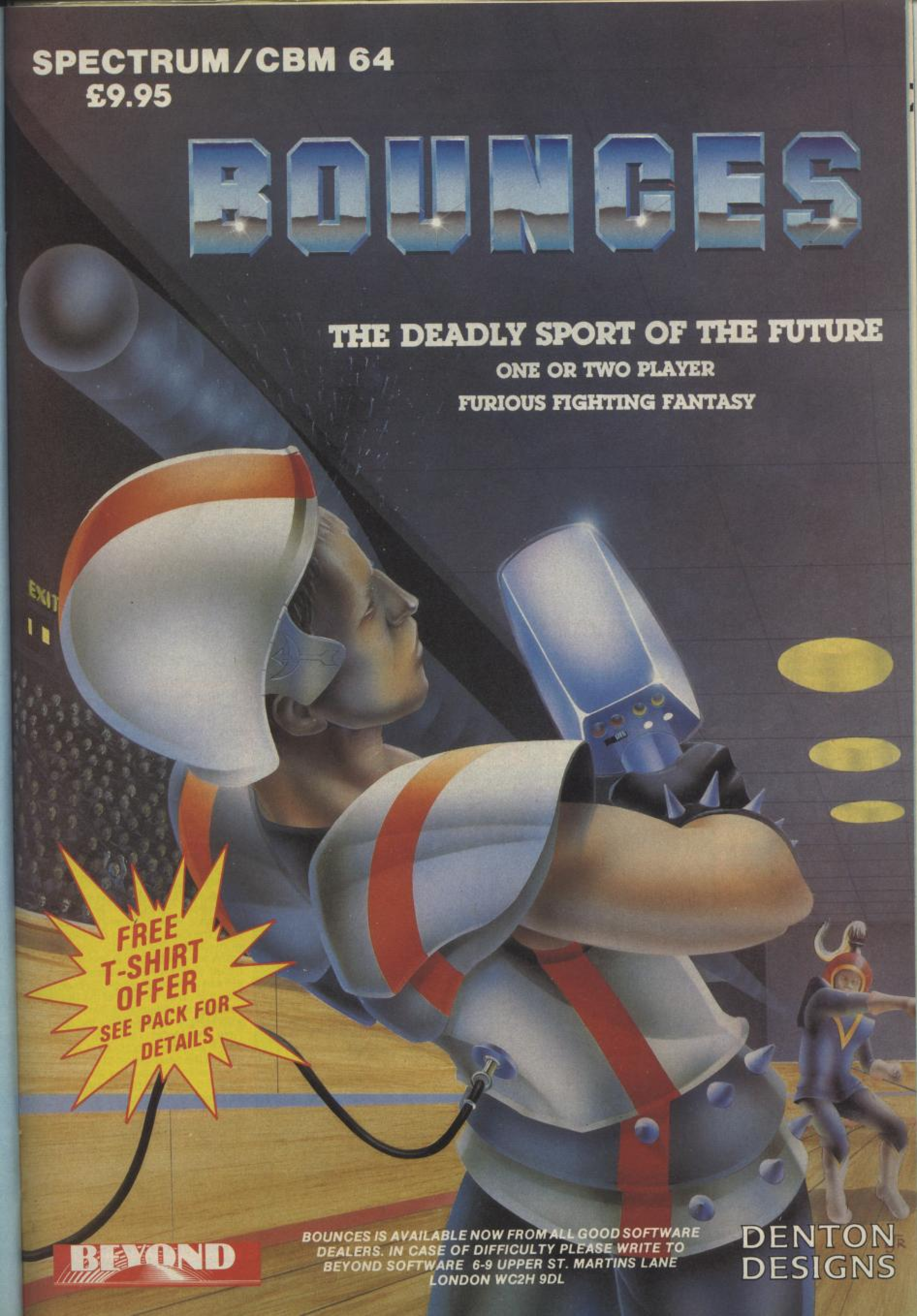
LASER SHIELD Not worth using in the first Citadel. The robots are more trigger happy later on.

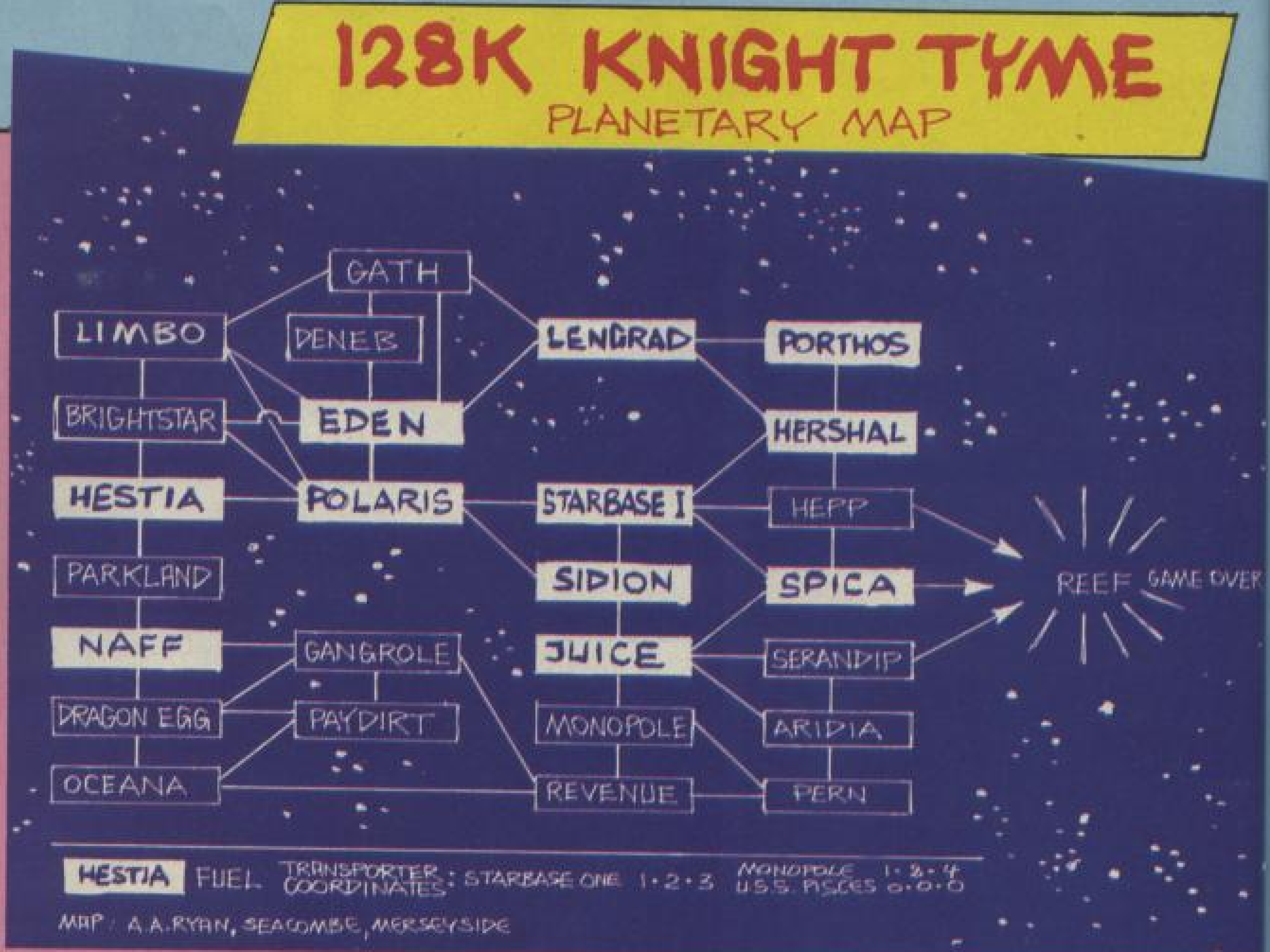
QUAZATRON REFERENCE CHART

Along with his tips on *Quazatron*, **Steve Turner** has also sent me this reference chart for the droids in the game. As you can see, Steve has made a start for you, but filling in the chart as you go along should help to make playing *Quazatron* a little bit easier.

QUAZATRON REFERENCE CHART

DROID	CLASS = GRAPPLE DIFFICULTY	DRIVE UNIT	POWER UNIT	WEAPON	CHASSIS	DEVICES
A1	ALPHA	Ultragrav	Cybonic MK2		Coralloy MK2	
AB	The Elite Class					
C1						
C2						
C3						
ST	BETA					
S2	The officers and					
S3	executives					
S4						
C5						
B2						
L2						
S6						
B3	GAMMA					
B4	The Professionals					
L3						
L4						
00						Power Boost
L5						
L6	DELTA					
B5	The middle class					
B6						
B7						Rax Thruster
R5						Disruptor Shield
R6						
R7						
R8	EPSILON	Linear MK3				
U7	The working class	Linear MK2				
U8		Linear MK2	Chemifax MK1			
U9		Linear MK1	Chemifax MK1	None		
X8		Gravitronic MK2	Chemifax MK1	None	Trialium MK1	
X9		Linear MK1	Chemifax MK1	None	Duralite	None
KLP2	He knows his place!	Linear MK1	Chemifax MK1	Pulse Laser	Duralite	None


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48K

KNIGHT TYME

Last issue I published some tips for *Knight Tyme* on the 128K Spectrum so it's only fair that this month there should be some for the 48K version, as there are differences between the two games.

Quite a few complete solutions have been sent in already, but here are some tips to get Magic Knight to the planet **Retreat** as provided by **Darren Lee** from Birmingham, who like all the others claims to be the first person to complete the entire game! With luck, the full solution will be printed in the August issue.

First, drop the Gadget X and pick up the Mirror. Go to the bridge and take the Instant Film from *Gordon* and the McTablet food from *Sarab*. Cast *Fortify Yourself* spell. Now go to the recreation room and pick up the Camera. Give the Camera and the Instant Film to *SE3E*. Unwear your Cloak of Invisibility and give it to *Gordon* for safe keeping. Command *SE3E* to help and he will take your picture. Take the Photograph from him and read it to make sure that the picture is actually of Magic Knight. Now go to *Derby IV* and command him to help. *Derby IV* will give you a Blank ID Card. To get this authorized, go to *SE3E* and take the pot of glue from him and have an accident with the glue by pressing Fire twice. Now wear the ID Card. Take the Advert from *Sharon* and go to the airlock. Drop the Advert underneath a pentagonal locker, climb onto the Advert and jump up onto the locker. Pick up the Starmap and the Pewter Tankard. Give both of these to *Gordon*. Now move the ship to **Polaris** and re-fuel it. Then move the ship to **Starbase One** at the slowest speed in order to conserve fuel. Get the Advert again and go to the Cargo Hold. Get the 5W Resistor. Give this to *Gordon* and command him to help. If he is asleep, fortify him and he will wake up. *Gordon* will now fix the transporter. Get the Advert and teleport down to **Starbase One**. The co-ordinates are X1 Y2 Z3. Get everything on this planet (this might involve wearing certain objects if your hands are full). Be careful not to drop the Qwark Bomb. Give the Pot of Glue to *Hectorr* and beam back to the ship. The co-ordinates are X0 Y0 Z0. Now give the Qwark Bomb to *SE3E*. Move the ship to **Monopole** (this is *Hooper*'s asteroid). Before beaming down wear the Gasmask and the Cloak of Invisibility. The planet's co-ordinates are X1 Y8 Z4. In the room called *This Way To Hooper*, you will see a little triangle on the floor. Pick this up as it is part of the Golden Sundial. Now go to the room with *Hooper* sitting on his throne. Take the Magic Talisman. If he wants to keep it fortify him. Also pick up the second part of the Golden Sundial. Beam back up to the ship and drop the bits of the Golden Sundial and the Magic Talisman. Unwear the Gasmask and the Cloak of Invisibility. Take the Chocolate Heart from *Derby IV* and give it to *Sharon*. To get the last part of the Golden Sundial move the Starship to **Retreat**.

Don't forget to keep fortifying yourself throughout the game or else you'll die. If you still can't work out the co-ordinates for **Retreat** then I'll give them to you along with the rest of the game next month.





I'm feeling in a particularly generous mood this month. As well as the infinite lives POKE for *Turbo Esprit*, here are some tips for the game as well. These were sent in by **Ian Eggleton** from Reading in Berkshire.

If the message "Hit Car closing in" appears on the screen, then move to the far right (while staying on the left hand side of the road) and slow down. As soon as the magenta coloured car passes you, speed up behind it. Chase it at full speed until it slows down and then smother it in a hail of bullets. This should give you about 500 extra points.

At the start of the game try to find the armoured car on the map and then search it down. Follow it at a safe speed until the first drug car rendezvous appears. Blast this before it has a chance to deliver the drugs and then continue after the car. Get rid of all four blue drug cars in this way. After all these have been disposed of, drive up beside the red armoured car. Keep driving into this until the message, "Armoured car submits", appears. You have then completed the game. A few words of warning though, from Mr Eggleton: when shooting at cars, fire and then immediately slow down. This stops you driving into the explosion and catching fire.

BOUNDER POKE Infinite Lives

Last issue several of us spent many hours battling through *Bounder* trying to make a map of the game. Our task would have been a lot easier if we had possessed these infinite lives POKEs from **Chris Smith** and **Jason Bean** from York. Anyway, here they are in all their glory. Type in the first block and then when the screen looks as though the computer has reset, type in the other POKEs. You will then find that your little yellow tennis ball has suddenly become indestructible.

```
10 CLEAR 24831
20 LOAD "boing" CODE
30 POKE 61106,183
40 POKE 61107,17
50 POKE 61087,183
60 POKE 61088,17
70 POKE 61089,0
80 POKE 61092,224
90 POKE 61093,255
100 POKE 61100,191
110 RANDOMIZE USR 61074
```

This loads the main block. The computer will pretend to reset — DON'T PANIC. Just type in this line:

```
POKE 36610, 0 RANDOMIZE USR 34600
```

SPINDIZZY POKE Infinite Time

Here's a routine from **Stuart Mitchell** of Knarseborough in North Yorkshire to aid you when playing *Spindizzy*. Simply type it in and RUN as usual and you get infinite time.

```
1 REM SPINDIZZY POKES
5 BORDER 0 : PAPER 0: INK 7
6 CLEAR 24831 : POKE 23613 , 250
7 PRINT AT 10, 12 ; "PLAY TAPE"
8 DATA 97, 110, 111, 32, 108
9 DATA 111, 97, 100, 101, 114
10 LET a$="": FOR n=1 TO 10
11 READ a: LET a$=a$+CHR$ a
12 NEXT n : LOAD a$ CODE
13 POKE 65141,140
14 POKE 65149,91 : LET t=0
15 DATA 33, 96, 234, 17, 198
16 DATA 200, 1, 7, 0, 237
17 DATA 176, 195, 0, 178
18 FOR n=23296 TO 23309
19 READ a : LET t=t+a: POKE n,a
20 NEXT n
21 IF t<>1572 THEN GO TO 23
22 RANDOMIZE USR 65118
23 CLEAR : PRINT "DATA ERROR!"
```

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING FIREMAN POKES

Last issue we printed part of the solution for *The Incredible Shrinking Fireman*. However, only four lives are provided in the game, so if you're having trouble avoiding the nasties lurking in the rubber factory, then here are some POKEs from **Bernard Blundell** who lives in Wigan. These will give Shrunken Sid infinite lives and also (if you're really finding the going tough) get rid of all the monsters.

```
10 BORDER 0 : PAPER 0 : INK 7 : CLEAR 24999
20 LOAD "" CODE : POKE 23336,195 : RANDOMIZE USR 23296
30 POKE 60217,167 : REM INFINITE LIVES
40 POKE 59876,0 : REM NO MONSTERS
50 RANDOMIZE USR 49605
```

You may prefer to play the game with the infinite lives POKE working — if you get rid of the monsters the factory seems very empty and the game is a bit boring to watch.

PLAYING TIPS

BATMAN POKES

For anyone who enjoys playing OCEAN's *Batman*, but is a bit miffed at being killed all the time, here's a POKE for infinite lives and ever-lasting springy jumps. So now you can sproing your way around *Batman* to your heart's content, thanks to **Jon** from 'Sum Where in Leicestershire'.

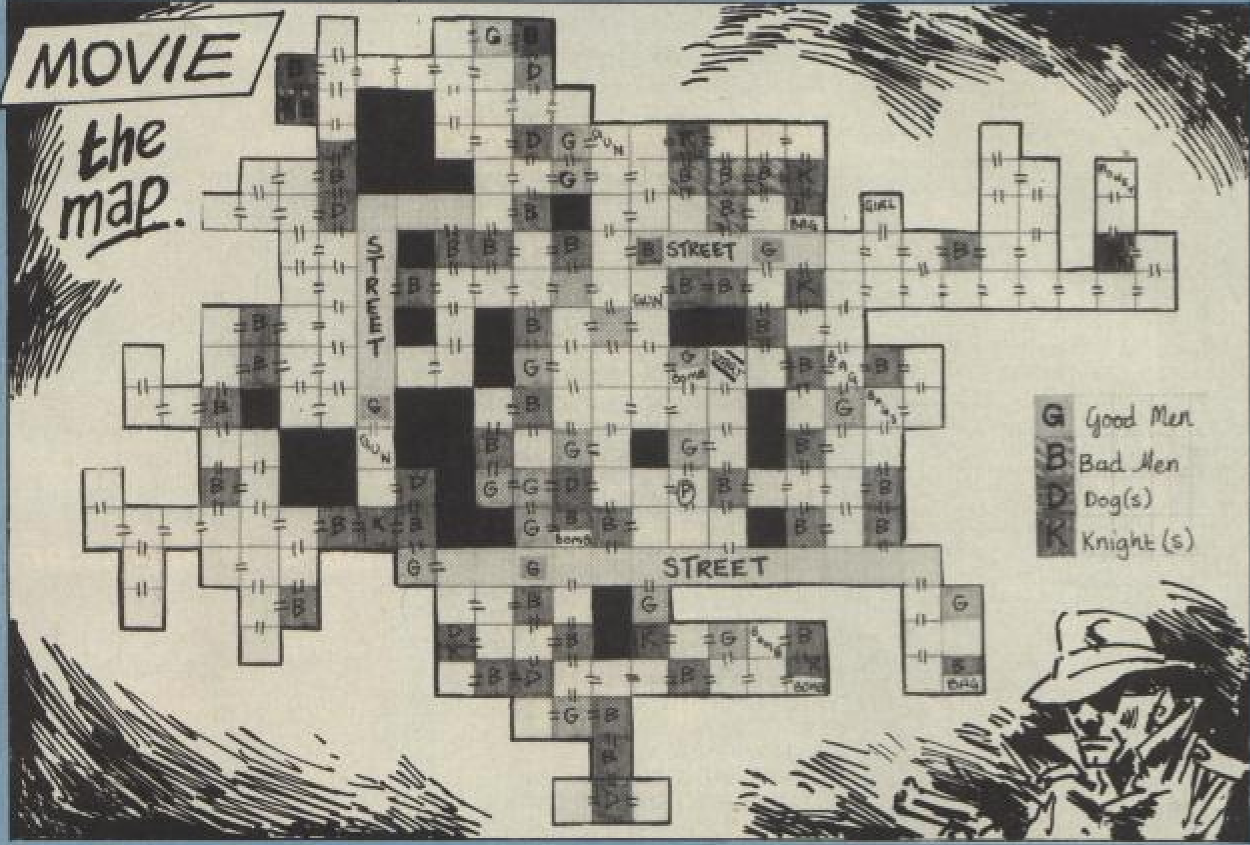
```
10 CLEAR 65535
20 LET SUM=0
30 FOR N=64768 TO 64872
40 READ A
50 POKE N,A
60 LET SUM=SUM + A
70 NEXT N
80 IF SUM <> 13441 THEN PRINT "ERROR IN DATA":STOP
90 PRINT "START BATMAN ORIGINAL"
100 RANDOMIZE USR 64768
110 DATA 17, 26, 6, 221, 33, 48, 117, 175
120 DATA 61, 55, 205, 86, 5, 243, 48, 240
130 DATA 17, 131, 250, 213, 1, 48, 122, 197
140 DATA 1, 52, 2, 33, 98, 119, 62, 68
150 DATA 50, 109, 119, 62, 250, 50, 112, 119
160 DATA 62, 200, 237, 79, 201, 62, 250, 50
170 DATA 142, 250, 62, 177, 50, 145, 250, 33
180 DATA 177, 250, 17, 177, 249, 122, 1, 38
190 DATA 0, 237, 176, 50, 202, 249, 50, 206
200 DATA 249, 50, 214, 249, 62, 201, 50, 215
210 DATA 249, 205, 177, 249, 33, 93, 253, 34
220 DATA 168, 252, 195, 127, 252, 62, 166, 50
230 DATA 136, 146, 175, 50, 190, 143, 195, 128
240 DATA 101
```

Simply type this program in, type RUN and start the *Batman* tape from the beginning.

TURBO ESPRIT

Chris (Jetman) Turner (The Number 1 Level 42 Fan) ((?)) has been at it again. This issue he's sent in a routine for DURELL's *Turbo Esprit*. Type this into your Spectrum and you'll miraculously have infinite lives. Suddenly the job of cleaning up those mean and dirty streets becomes a mite easier.

```
10 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0: CLEAR 26624: LOAD "" CODE 16384: PRINT AT 6,0: LOAD "" CODE
20 PRINT AT 8,0; INK 7; BRIGHT 1;"(1) Input no. of lives"; AT 9,0; "(2) Infinite lives"
30 LET I$=INKEY$: IF I$ <> "1" AND I$ <> "2" THEN GO TO 30
40 IF I$ = "1" THEN INPUT "LIVES ? (MAX 74) "; l: POKE 64250,l+48 : RANDOMIZE USR 64837
50 POKE 29893,0 : RANDOMIZE USR 64837
```



ID — THE FINAL SOLUTION

Last month I published five of the keywords for *ID*. And as promised, here are the rest of the keywords in the game, in case any of you are completely stuck. Once again thanks go to **Matthew Musgrove** of Bracknell in Berkshire and **Roland Allen** from Leamington Spa for kindly supplying these tips.

6) *I was drawn from a stone* **Mood:** whole **Keyword:** Arthur.
7) *What a spectacle, Mona* **Mood:** curious **Keyword:** Mona Lisa
8) *I was a strange fruit* **Mood:** happy **Keyword:** apple
9) *I led them a merry dance* **Mood:** scrungy **Keyword:** Pied Piper
10) *I was in a pocket* **Mood:** neutral **Keyword:** money

Before you can start to find out *ID*'s previous identities his trust must be built up to around 70%, although this varies sometimes. The best way to gain *ID*'s confidence is to define things like love, hate and so on. When you do this then *ID*'s trust goes up quite quickly.

MINI TIPS

SPLAT

The copy of *Splat* on the *Off the Hook* compilation includes a cheat mode. Once you have obtained a high score by playing the game (200 points or more) enter the name 'Ian' and 'level ?' appears on the screen.

Key in the number of the level you require if you want to resume play.

STARSTRIKE II CORRECTION

Oops! The first mistake in my playing tips courtesy of a ZX printer. The POKEs for Starstrike II have a small mistakette in line 1001. It should read 0,0,17,16,39. My eyesight was obviously failing me after working into the wee hours in the dimly lit vaults of CRASH Towers — I mistook a 5 for a 6 on the printout. There's also another little fault on line 110. There should be a hash sign instead of a dollar sign. It might make your life easier if you leave out LINE 25, too.

Anyway that's that cleared up. Sorry if anyone wasted too much time trying to get the routine to work. Hopefully these corrections will make everything Okay and generally ticketty boo as our Doc Martened Editor has a habit of saying! The most important thing to remember when you're the new Tips Minion is always blame inanimate objects like a ZX printer for any mistakes in the Playing Tips as they can't talk back and tell everyone how inept you really are!

WAY OF THE TIGER
Pole Fighting

Practically every other Playing Tip envelope I open has solutions for completing GREMLIN GRAPHICS' *Way of the Tiger*. It makes me wonder if there's anyone left who hasn't finished the game. Just in case though, here's how to get through the next section, *Pole Fighting*. Thanks to everyone who wrote in and especially to **Peter Harrap** of Chingford in London whose tips I'm using this month.

The Armed Skeleton keep using a high jab
The Ninja keep using high blow with an occasional low jab at his ankles
The Dwarf possibly the hardest to conquer. Keep doing a low jab and a middle jab. Other hints for getting through this section are: don't jump whatever you do, because the pole is slippery and you will fall in the water. Don't worry if you get hit, keep attacking with the same moves by keeping your fingers on the keys and your opponent is soon defeated and you can go on to the next stage, *Sword Fighting*, which I shall give tips for next month.

Well, that's about it for another month. Hopefully we should have more maps and the complete solution to *Knight Tyme* and *Heavy On The Magick*. I'd be particularly interested in tips, hints POKEs and maps for *Ghosts and Goblins*, *Equinox* and *Jack The Nipper*. So keep those POKEs and hints rolling in. Send them to the usual address: HANNAH SMITH (*THE ONLY GIRLIE TIPSTER*) CRASH PLAYING TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

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When a magazine is rising in circulation as rapidly as CRASH is doing it tends to sell out immediately and you may experience difficulty in obtaining your copy every month. So the best thing to do is place a regular order with your local newsagent, which you can do by handing him this form.

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WINNERS & PRIZES



128K COMPETITIONS

As this issue goes to press, the deadline for the first two competitions sponsored by **NEWSFIELD** — yes, that's us — expired. So here are the names of all the lucky people who collected prizes in the April and May 128K competitions:

Martin P Elson of Ash Close, CT6 7NJ collects the 128K Spectrum on offer in the April issue, while ten more entrants collect a splendiferous CRASH T Shirt. They are:

Steven John Reilly, Colonial Road, B9 5NR; Ian Morta, Llanvair Close, SL5 9HX; David G Pestridge, Sandringham Way, DY5 3JX; Elwin De Vries, V Pabstlaan 14, Holland; Sarah Corbishley, School Lane, CV8 2GU; John Griffen, Buckingham Road, SN3 1JA; Andrew Fox, Lake House, YO17 9QF; G. Campbell, Waldo Street, NE29 6NJ; Paris Nainggolan, Thatchers Close, RH6 9LE; Mrs C Moore, Hollybank Close, S12 2BN

The May 128K competition was won by **Simon Humphrey** of Coppice Walk, B90 4HY who collects his very own 128K Spectrum, while five more winners are due to collect a CRASH Hat and CRASH T Shirt by way of consolation. Here are their names — is yours amongst them?

Roger Chapman, Springfield Farm, DL6 3JU; Chris Geggus, Ascension Road, RM5 3RT; R. Pledge, Stratford Road, CO39 6AT; D. R. Coleman, Goresbrook Road, RM9 6XX; Lee Duffy, Cedar Road, S30 5AS

TURBO ESPRIT COMPETITION

DURELL offered a radio controlled Porsche as the top prize in their *Turbo Esprit* comp — and they kindly sent it to us at CRASH Towers. The temptation to open up the cardboard box which contained the prize, slot in a couple of batteries and have just a LITTLE go was almost impossible to resist. Fortunately, Franco Frey stepped in, seized the carton and squirrelled it away somewhere safe. So **S A Westland** of The Avenue, BR4 0EF will soon be sent an untouched, brand new radio controlled model Porsche.

The runners up all collect copies of *Combat Lynx*, *Turbo Esprit*, *Saboteur* and *Critical Mass*:

Leo McKibbins, The Readings, CM18 7BU; Fraser Campbell, Woodbank, LE2 9QP; Aaron Huggett, Woodlands Close, DE2 5DZ; Andrew Winter, Barnhill Square, NN3 5BB; B Doherty, Stephenson Walk, CW7 2TD; Michael Brammer, Windmill Drive, HX3 7DF; David Cole, Wyndhurst, TR9 6HW; Peter Cousins, Shirley Avenue, CT11 7AU; Nigel Palmer, Glenalmond, NR4 6AG; Matthew Peskett, St Crispin, PO20 8DQ

TEE VEE TREAT WITH DR WHO

A certain **M Beck** from Genefax House, S10 3FJ came first in the competition sponsored by **MICROPOWER** in honour of their game *Dr Who and the Mines of Terror* which is still not quite finished for the Spectrum. A visit to the TV Studio where the BBC makes Dr Who is on the cards for M Beck, who should be contacted very soon by the Man from **MICROPOWER** to sort out the details of the visit. Twenty runners up also get a Dr Who Pack, specially put together for the competition.

DR WHO PACK WINNERS
Ahmed Bachelani, Valley Drive, NW9 9NS; Graeme Hansford, Witchurch Avenue, BH18 8LP; Gavin Burr, Stratford Road, CV32 6BQ; Ashley Williams, Dairy Ground, OX17 3QG; Mr S W Smith, Rimswell Road, TS19 7LJ; S J Zsibrita, Bowood Road, EN3 7LH; Daniel Watkins, Meadow Rise, DY12 1JS; Alistair Granda, Kingsley Road, NN2 7BL; Ian Hunt, Old Lodge Lane, CR2 4AN; Graham Kenny, Elmwood Drive, PR1 OXT; C Shepherd, Wimborne Close, SE12 8PH; Luke Nation, Westward Road, BS13 8DA; Glenn McDowall, Ashfield House, SP2 7EG; Dr P C B Page, Beryl Road, L43 9RS; Paul Field, Garstang Road, PR2 4RY; Magnus Ramage, Claremont Gardens, G62 6PG; Mark James, Crosswood Crescent, EH14 7LX; N. J. Palmer, Glenalmond, NR4 6AG; , Constantine Hondros, Sint Antoniusstraat 27, The Netherlands; Paul Barratt, Queen Street, S65 2SR

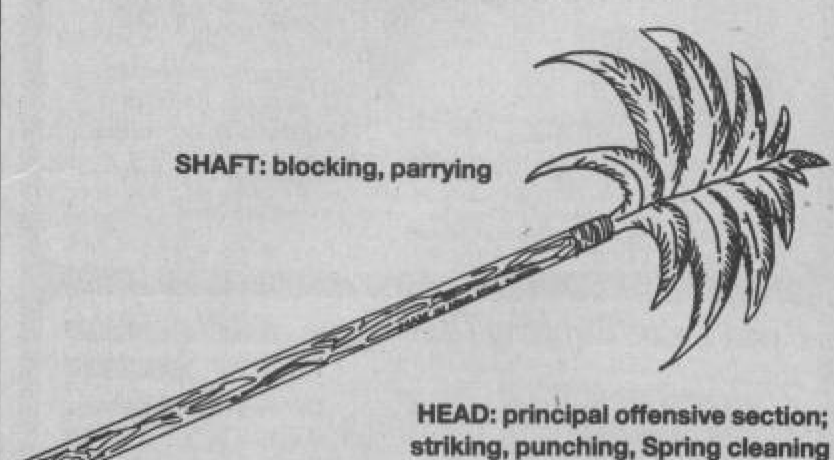
SORRY GEOFF, SORRY GEOFF!

Your ever-faithful Minion got in a bit of a tizz when it came to writing up the **MELBOURNE HOUSE** competition for *Mugsy's Revenge* in the May issue. Silly me! I confused Geoff Brown (Big Cheese at **US GOLD** et al) with Geoff Heath (The real Big Cheese at **MELBOURNE HOUSE**). So far no threatening letters have arrived from either Geoff, so it looks as if I might have been forgiven. Sorry gents! Anyway, fifty cunning caption writers collect their very own copy of *Mugsy's Revenge* for writing witty words in the bubble that popped out of Geoff HEATH's mouth on the comp page. Here are their names:

Mark Raynam, Barnaby Rudge, CM1 4YG; Rory McVeigh, Colinmill, BT17 0AR; Guy Walters, Knotty Green, HP9 1XL; Jim Reid, Old Falmouth Rd, TR1 2HN; Mark S Rayner, Rosebank Ave, HA0 2TL; Dereck McCall, Woodlands, FK10 3PJ; Peter Ellison, Station Rd, CW4 7AU; Kwokwa Lee, Ritson St, SA11 2RN; AG Packard, Fulmar Rd, RM12 5LL; Adam Playford, Cyde Rd West, M20 8WJ; BS Shimmings, Abbey Drive, TN38 8BD; Bryan Hopwood, Wisden Rd, Hertfordshire; Chris Greenway, Field Close, GU4 7DS; Rodney Tregale, Howard Avenue, SI2 1LB; James Campbell, Tunell Gardens, N11 2AP; Simon Hayes, Millbank Ave, BT55 7DQ; Michael Bowditch, Goldcroft, BA21 4DA; Graham Kenny, Elmswood Drive, PR1 0XT; Justin Parker, Buckingham Gardens, KT8 9TW; Garth Frazer, Church Ave, BT37 0PJ; Jeff Prior, Sutlej Road, SE7 7DB; James Guise, Charles Ave, LN11 0BG; Paul Barret, Queen St, S65 2SR; James Earl, Hamilton Crescent, HA2 9JF; Des O'Connor, Audrey Gardens, Middlesex; B Kitts, ELgin Park, BS6 6RX; Almas Siddiq, Garforth St, OL9 6NY; Matthew Odonoghue, Valley Rd, Kent; Ian Knewstubb, Deans Meadow, HP4 1RW; Ian Jackson, Yarborough Rd, DN34 4DW; James Stimson, Merthyr St, CF6 6LD; Thurstan Hall-Williams, Sudbury Hill, HA1 3NH; Pete Pointon, Sandwell St, WS1 3EH; Karl Fewster, Hallgarth Avenue, DN16 1VG; David Sullivan, Jesson Rd, WS1 3AX; Adrian Shakeshady, Watson Garth, YO5 7EE; Gary Wedge, Newhall St, WS11 1AD; Andrew Waldram, Water Lane, DN22 6SZ; Derek Alan Tate, Middleton Rd, NR31 7PQ; Simon Page, Ormesby Rd, NR29 4LA; J Wilkinson, Thornton Rd, CA3 4HZ; Sue Hanmore, Queens Rd, PO36 8DT; Matthew H Smith, Sandringham Rd, PR8 2WY; Sean Stephenson, Heigh Rd, NE66 3TJ; M Stockbridge, Jefferson Rd, ME12 2PX; Greg Stekemen, Alexandra Park Road, N22 4BJ; Nigel Young, Central Rd, PO16 9AG; Christopher King, Highgate Rd, SK12 5JL; Justin Brown, Park Rd, NP6 4EH; Damian Duffy, Pool Hey, L28 4EP:

WAY OF THE STALKING DUSTER!

THE BASIC DUSTER
as used in the noble art of Jeet-Duster-Do



Thus was the martial art invented by **J Singh** of Manor Rd TF1 4PN titled in his entry for **MIRRORSOFT**'s Way of the Pointy Stick competition — Jeet-Duster-Do, to give the art its full oriental title.

According to Mr Singh, Jeet-Duster-Do was developed around 1950 by oppressed peasants as a defence against armed aggressors such as milkmen, coalmen and rent collectors. Based on the manipulation of the Feather Duster, a variety of fighting moves evolved during the Thatcheri period as economic hardship drove its practitioners underground . . .

Mr Singh wins a course of martial arts lessons funded by **MIRRORSOFT** as a result of his winning entry. Ten runners up get a twelve month subscription to the martial arts magazine FIGHTERS, while everyone who entered should receive a *Sai Combat* poster in due course (we can't list all YOUR names here!)

POINTY STICK RUNNERS UP
Stephen and Andrew Barrett, Teazel Avenue, B30 1LZ; WK Russell, South Beach Rd, Ardrossan, KA22 8AX; Jasper Smith, Spey View Cottage, Moray, IV32 7NS; Kevin Curtin, Elmgrove, Nairn, IV12 4SN; Wayne Travis, Willis Walk, Tewkesbury, GL20 8RW; Steven A Graham, Green Lane, CA22 7QB; Jay Sachania, Smithergill Court, MK13 7LT; Ka Hung Man, Farm Way, WS2 3ST; John Hargest, Whitehall PO, GL5 1EA; Tim Clarke, Highfield Ave, CB4 2AL



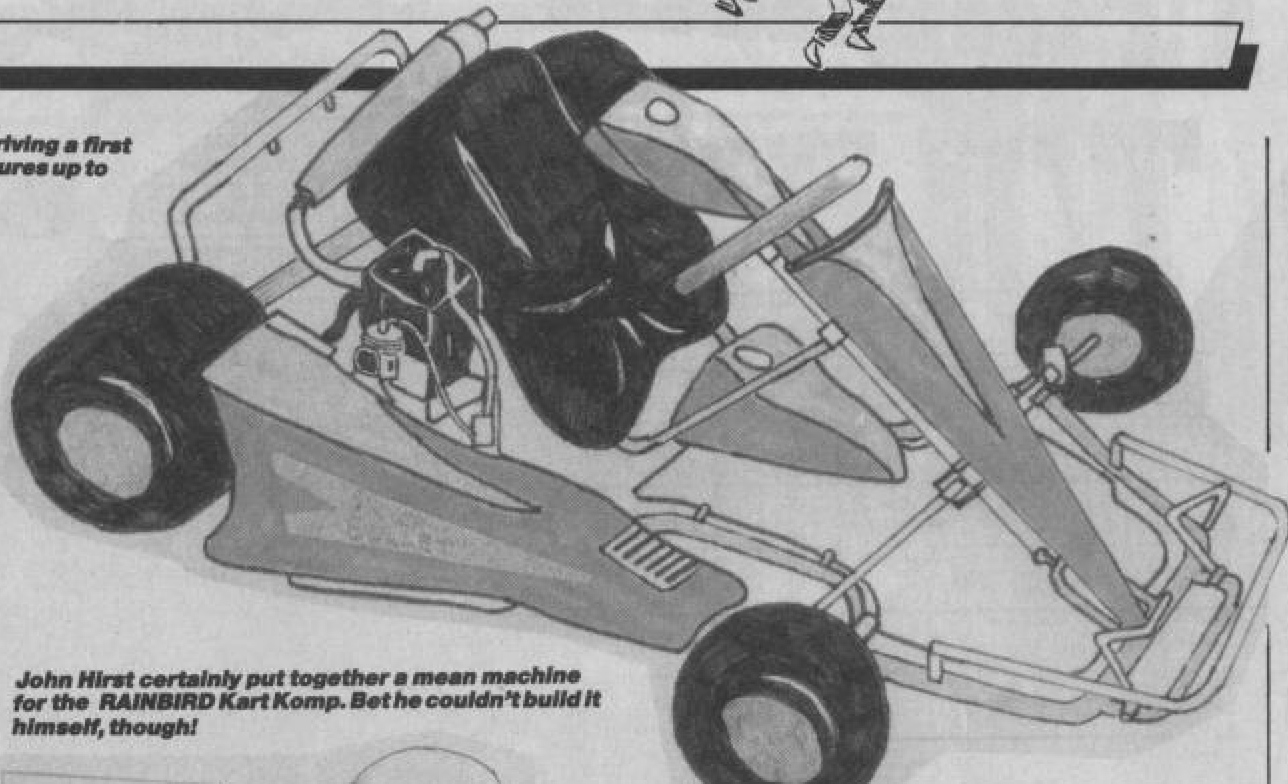


Nice one Alan. You should soon be driving a first rate kart before long — hope it measures up to the Kart in your imagination!

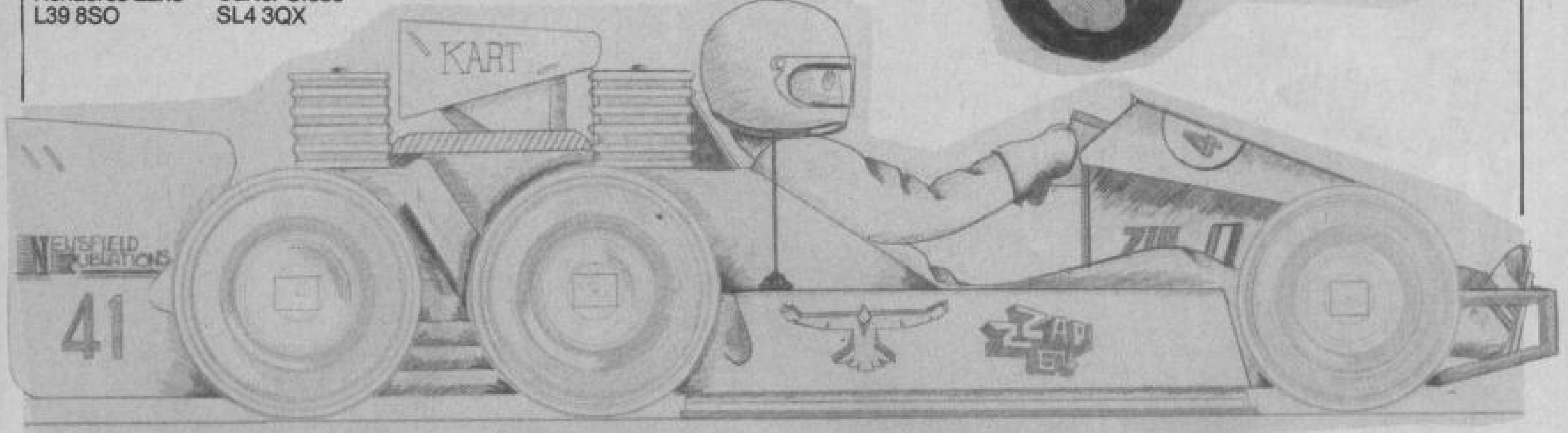
RAINBIRD KART COMP

At last — after all the waiting, **NEWSFIELD** and **RAINBIRD** are pleased to be able to announce the names of the two lucky people who will soon be able to go shopping down at **ZIP KART** with Uncle Tony Rainbird. With a £1,000 voucher each to spend. Not bad eh? In a few years time we might even see **John Hirst** or **Alan Myers** zooming round the Formula One circuits of the world, who knows . . . Well done lads.

John S.C. Hirst	Alan Myers
Renacres Lane	Carter Close
L39 8SO	SL4 3QX



John Hirst certainly put together a mean machine for the RAINBIRD Kart Komp. Bet he couldn't build it himself, though!



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....

postcode T SHIRT SIZE ....

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My top five programs are:

TITLE	VOTE OUT OF TEN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

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Name ....

Address ....

....

Postcode ....

T SHIRT SIZE ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

TALKING TOLKIEN

Crash Competition

Map a Minion's Environment and WIN!

The Wimp's Tale:

Hobbits were lucky creatures. Sure, they lived in a rather strange land and sometimes had to cope with the forces of darkness and evil, but their day to day existence was largely troublefree and pleasant.

Not so in the case of your faithful Competition Minion, I can assure you, dear readers. The riders of Nazgul are as naught, mere wimps on silly ponies when compared with the spiky-haired fiends from the ZZAP! offices who charge round CRASH Towers riding upon their giant and frightening egos.

Hobbits live in nice comfy bur- rowses, all warm and snuggly. All the space I have to rest my weary head in during the working day is a grotty broom cupboard, decorated with soggy dusters. The merest move usually sets off a clattering of brooms and mop buckets — hardly conducive to kip.

The Gods on High up in the Art Garret of CRASH Towers con- stantly demand that I scamper up and down a steep hill, fetching and carrying for them as they request more urgent supplies to keep them at work — and then they demand that I rouse myself, leg it up three flights of stairs and plug in the coffee machine for them. (No tea-hut for the eminent personalities up in the Art Room — they have a Habitat coffee maker with matching cups and saucers and a special order from the local dairy for milk in designer bottles.)

Jiffybag Queen, Aggie forever calls out for her stapler to be refilled so she may seal up those little packages which you lot so dearly love to have arrive through your letterbox. "Stamp that great pile of envelopes," she cries, "now put them all in a mailbag, weigh them and nip them down to the post office sharpish".

Then the Dragon of mail order, Sally Newman, insists that I sort out all your competition entries and stack them neatly in the pigeonholes that Franco the carpenter has built specially for the storing of Mail. "C'mere," shouts Guru Denise, telling me to clean her subscription computer, change the ribbon on her printer and sort out all the **MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER** application forms for her. All the while I am in the Mail Order department I find myself teased mercilessly by Doreen and Pat, Despatch Department Operatives, who find it great fun to staple my jumper to the table while I'm not looking and cover me in rubber stamp pad ink.

But the worst time of all is had in that most dangerous of regions — the Editorial floor. Ego-crazed ZZAP! 64 reviewers have to be avoided, lest they demand I run out and buy them yet another mid-morning snack (with my own money, usually). Ace lensperson Cameron Pound is always ready to half-blind me with a burst of dazzling light from his turbocharged, mains-driven flashgun and ol' Doc Marten Kidd is not averse to aiming the odd size ten boot in my general direction. (Sometimes this Minion thinks he's a sort of Editorial cat who gets kicked every time something goes wrong.)

Girlie Tipster Hannah Smith has to be avoided too. A prod in the eye with a broken umbrella is most painful — have you ever tried making tea (white, no sugar) with eyes streaming from the impact of an umbrella? To add insult to injury, she's a demon fighter with the handbag perfume spray — it's really embarrassing nipping down to the sarnie shop ponging of girlie niff!

As you can see, dear readers, the land in which I work is a hostile one — not given over to tinkling brooks, bosky glades and sun dappled vegetation. Anything that vaguely resembles vegetable matter (and meat, fruit, sweeties — in fact anything remotely edible) is immediately seized upon by the Demon Liddon — a hunger crazed food addict who gnaws the flesh from your fingers when you hand him his mid-morning pastie and chips if you don't snatch your paw out of the way dead quick.

You've read about the kind of problems I face daily on previous Comp pages. Maybe it would help me negotiate the hazards I have to face in CRASH Towers if you drew me a map — you know, the kind of map that comes in the back of Tolkein's books. Yes, what a good idea. . . .

It just so happens that **Melbourne House** are having a Tolkein Month this month — they've repackaged *The Hobbit* in a nifty double cassette case, left out the book and dropped the price. *Lord of the Rings* remains unchanged, though — no bad thing as it still tops the Adventure Hotline chart.

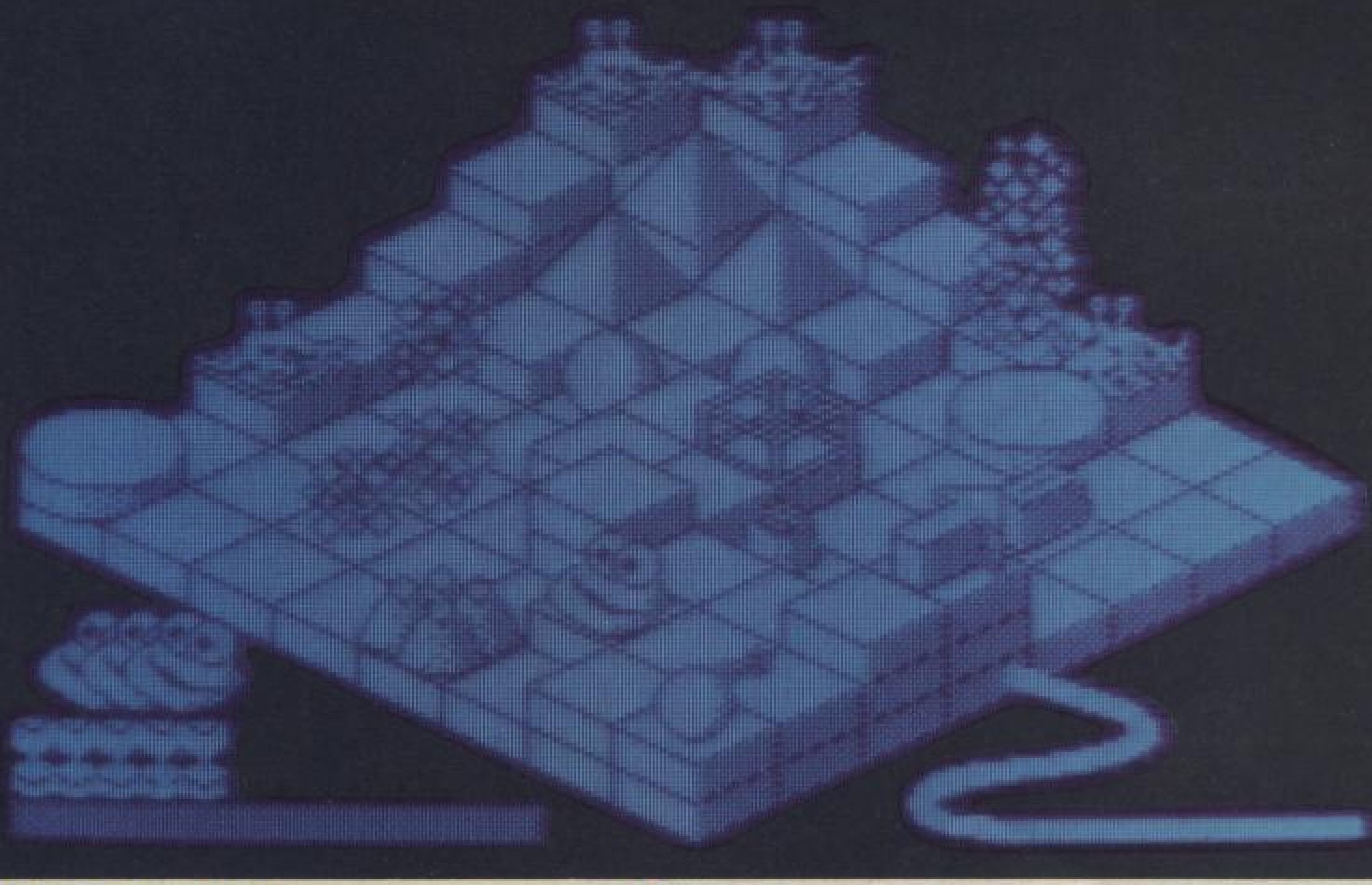
The nice Geoff HEATH, bossman at Melbourne House, is offering 50 copies of the new, repackaged *Hobbit* as prizes. Only as runner-up prizes, you understand — the top prize in this CRASH Towers Mapping Comp is one of the holograms made for the PCW Show by HOLOGRAFIX, together with a 1987 Tolkein Calendar. (Cast your eyes back to Issue 21 for more details on holograms.)

Get those Cartographical brains working, sharpen your imaginations and polish your pens. Come up with a Minion's Map of CRASH Towers and whizz it off to SAVE A MINION PAIN, PO BOX 10, CRASH TOWERS, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB, making sure your map arrives by 31st July.

Limited edition Hologram up for grabs

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INDEPENDENTS' DAYS

CLIVE SINCLAIR BOWS OUT of computing for the moment and CRASH magazine announces startlingly high circulation figures, higher than any other computing title. Could there possibly be any connection between these two facts? I will endeavour to find out in my own inimitable way, concentrating on the notion of CRASH being an independent, in a home games world dominated by Spectrum computers whose very existence can only be attributed to the dedicated band of independents who whole-heartedly backed the machine.

As I've said before, I have owned at one time or another most of the home computers released in the UK, the ZX80 being the only one to escape my curiosity and to achieve mass circulation. Of all these computers, the Spectrum holds a special place in my affections. It was this computer, in the early days as much as now, which encouraged and fostered a wide band of dedicated programmers who were out to squeeze every byte of code until it paid dividends.

All the credit cannot be given to Sinclair himself for the Spectrum phenomenon. It often seemed to programmers slaving over a hot heat sink that the boffin was determined to wreck the software market by a whole catalogue of hotchpotches and own-goals. These were: Interface 2, the Microdrives, and early (thankfully fruitless) attempts to corner the software market for himself, when profits from hardware were being cut to the bone under increasing competition from the UK and America.

Interface 2 was a debacle of the highest ineptitude. For a price, it enabled the games player to connect a joystick (something which could be done without add-ons to competitor machines) and gave access to a glossy catalogue of ROM cartridge releases which only remained impressive so long as the reader was unaware of a major restriction: they were 16K programs only. This at a time when the 16K machines were sampling their last bytes as they were overtaken by the much more popular 48K computers. The irony is that 16K programs take little time to load in any case — it is the 48K programs which require the bonus of instant loading.

As it was, the cartridges were a flop. Had they been aimed at 48K machines, the Interface 2 would have been an undoubted success; people were certainly prepared to pay an extra £2 for each faster, more reliably-loading program. But this was not the only faux pas to this interface, as its purchasers soon discovered to their undying chagrin. In the world of games joysticks Sinclair took on the Kempston system with his Interface 2 when the Kempston protocol had already become the standard. By breaking with this standard Sinclair created havoc with programmers and public alike. Many of the top games deemed the Kempston system as the only real must as an option for joystick control.

Microdrives are now infamously known as unreliable and infuriatingly fickle. The Microdrive tapes wear quickly and are regularly munched up by the drive mechanism. More fundamentally, the drives do not offer what is implied is their reason for being: they are slow and require several revolutions of the tape loop before the drive warms up sufficiently to load the program. For those who haven't heard enough, the consequences of running out of memory are not good. When a program is too long the computer crashes and the Microdrive spins on — wiping everything from its tape. It's not hard to see that the Microdrive cannot be put to serious use and is a commercial non-starter, explaining the conspicuous lack of Microdrive software.

If all the technical shortcomings of the micro passed largely unnoticed by the Spectrum latecomers, the lack of a proper keyboard was plain to all and sundry. In my opinion, the first rubber keyboard was better than the later intended improvement.

Clive Sinclair single-handedly created the mass home computer market, and all the above criticism isn't much more than nit-picking in the light of his major achievement. The ZX81 first popularised the notion of affordable home computing in the UK. Owing to Clive Sinclair's brainchild, the UK has more computers per capita than any other country in the entire world. But of all the good and bad of Sinclair's reign, the one thing he did not attempt was publishing his own 'official' magazine, and for this he can only be congratulated. Unlike Acorn, Amstrad and Commodore who did try, he was alone in letting the independents do what they do best — reporting the facts enthusiastically, without fear or trepidation, and with a desire to do what's best for the entire Sinclair phenomenon, and not just the central nominal company.

What I hope Alan Sugar realises about the company he has taken over is the role that independents played in making the Spectrum. The quality of their add-ons for the computer was very high and exceptionally good value for money. For example, Sinclair could only offer a 30 day waiting list and an inflated price for the 16 to 48K upgrade, while small workshops performed the service more rapidly and at less cost.

I think that the Spectrum phenomenon, and the important role of independents in the computer's success is not only a lesson for microcomputing, but for the whole British economy.

THE PRICE OF MAGIK

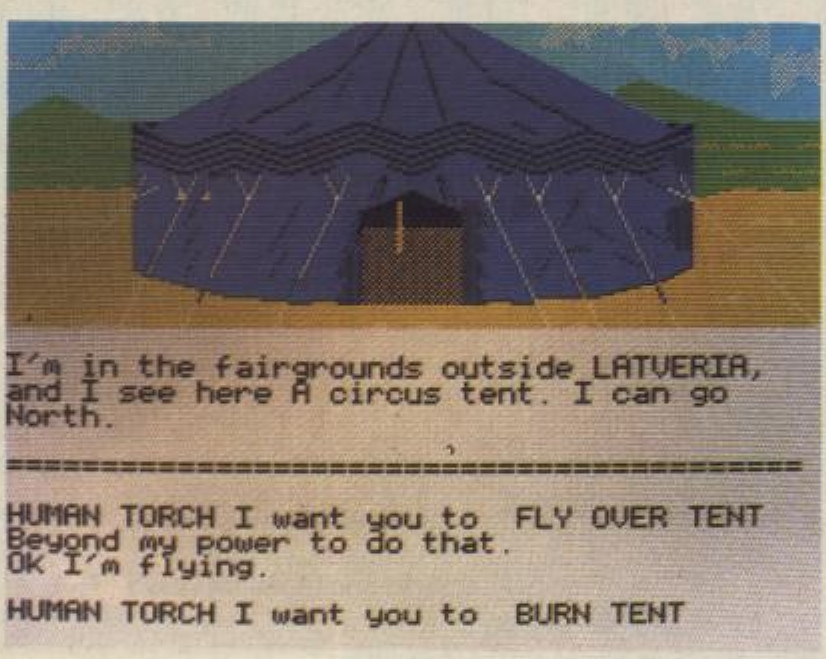
Producer: Level 9
Price: **£9.95**
Authors: **M, N & P Austin**

Mainstream adventuring has variously been described as going from strength to strength, with many new converts joining the flock every month; or going through a rough patch marked by declining releases at a time when arcade and arcade-adventure titles are selling in much greater numbers. I'll have to lay my cards on the table and line up with those who think the adventure scene has been quiet for some time which makes a Level 9 release all the more interesting.

Each successive Level 9 game receives tremendous accolades, and it would be only reasonable for journalists to look for a new angle and come to each new release with a more critical eye so as not to just rubber stamp the game and let it pass through as yet another sure-fire winner. But the truth is, Level 9 would seem destined to always produce top quality products, and now that much of each month's releases are composed of cheap, highly unoriginal games, a Level 9 game stands out a mile as offering a real challenge, a deeper, more intricate and interesting storyline, and a programming competence which makes the purchaser feel that he or she is actually getting something for the money asked.

It's not just the game itself which is in a different league, the backup to the consumer in the way of the excellent hint sheets puts many a competitor to shame. Anyone who takes adventuring seriously should check out the company who takes adventuring seriously. Level 9 concentrate solely on the activity of adventuring, and if you haven't played a Level 9 game before then *The Price of Magik* is every bit as good as their previous releases and will show what





adventuring as an entertainment medium has to offer.

But the most important aspect of Level 9 is their continuing improvements on their own superb adventuring system, improvements which give adventuring some pride in the race to get the very most out of the Spectrum.

Price of Magik is the follow up to *Red Moon* and so parts of the background storyline will have a familiar ring to them. Long ago the moon was red and shone magic onto the Earth, but the sun steadily bleached it of all power. While some magic still remained, the surviving Magicians created the red moon crystal of Baskalos as a new source of magical power and appointed the best of their number to watch over it. Under the care of a succession of wise guardians, the red moon crystal gained greatly in power, so that magic worked for miles around. Then Myglar struck.

Myglar was a noble sorcerer when he was appointed guardian of the crystal, and he cared for it faithfully. But, as life passed him by, Myglar began to ponder on his own mortality. Driven by a crazed desperation Myglar channelled the magic of the crystal into keeping himself alive. And so it is that the red moon fades and with it the last magic in the world. This is why you have been summoned to defeat Myglar and take his place as guardian, before all is lost.

As you might guess from the title, this game has you thrown deep into the misty world of magic, an area of interest covered very well in the microgames world, possibly because most people who've had a go at programming consider what software houses achieve with a Spectrum is magic! At the start of the game you know nothing of magic, how to wield it, or even what use it might be to you, but as the game progresses you become aware of increasing competence with your new found craft as new items and situations are encountered. There is a surprisingly high number of spells to become familiar with, eighteen we are told, and to win the game you've got to know them all.

As games players familiar with Level 9 might expect, this adventure really goes to town on helpful advice, prompts and playability. The vocabulary is nearly so expansive in its attempts to be as helpful as possible that it becomes bewildering — sometimes the responses to your attempts are almost too clever as the program does its level best to keep you informed. Things start off simply enough with the commonplace TAKE SHIELD, and WEAR ARMOUR, but you are soon wondering at the ingenuity of the programming with the likes of EXAMINE ALL BUT THE CROSS, MANDRAKE AND CANDLE AND GO EAST, and, WEREWOLF, GO EAST, ATTACK ALL, TAKE ALL. GO WEST AND DROP ALL — an insight into how the game develops character interaction more than hitherto seen in Level 9 games.

Other very useful commands include GET and EXAMINE EVERYTHING and the ever useful AGAIN which repeats the previous command. If I understand the instructions correctly it is only on the 128 Spectrum where the OOPS command can be used to step back a long way through the game you've played, perhaps to alter for the better some of your actions.

On all Spectrums there is a graphic version of the game with fairly concise text and on the other side of the tape — an expanded-text account of the adventure. For example, the herb garden, a couple of locations to the west of the start location, has the following description on the text-only version, 'You are in a herb garden on an insect-infested mound which rises through the marsh mist. A few stunted plants survive. An exit leads east to a woodshed. You can see an elder cross, a mandrake and some eyebright flowers.', but coalesces down to objects and exits only on the picture version. Because of this, many people are likely to want to play the text-only version by choice, especially as the pictures are simple and not particularly awe-inspiring.

The Price of Magik is a nigh on perfect game when compared to its competitors and, as new Level 9 releases tend to, represents a further improvement on their own adventure system, featuring the superb type-ahead that allows the player to input constantly and at all times. In both story background and style of play it has many similarities with *Red Moon* where the player can wander for a long time without having much clue as to where the solution of the game might be. The number of locations which the player can explore without having to solve intractable problems further distances this game from the old adventures where linear solution paths made for dull, string-of-problems style adventuring. The game really begins in earnest when you begin to learn how to use the magic when some aspects of D&D may appear familiar.

The unexciting loading screen made up of text instructions deviates from overall excellence (I think it might be time to offer the player a colourful intro screen, as Level 9 are now the only major company not to offer one), as does a scrolling list of text which, if not exactly untidy, is difficult to read. Simply separating your input from the computer's screen output with a blank line would have helped enormously. The unaltered Spectrum character set is a little disappointing too, although I must immediately qualify any implied criticism by pointing out that yellow on black looks so good that it would be sufficiently removed from the Spectrum black on white to satisfy most people.

The strong points to the game are not hard even for the most casual of adventurers to find. Apart from its astonishing length and intelligent plot, the incredible friendliness of the program's responses is a particular liking of mine, as easy communication with an adventure quickly involves the player and draws the adventurer into the plot. Adventuring once more becomes a pleasure and not a chore.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: involved
Graphics: average
Presentation: good
Input facility: complex sentences
Response: fast
Special features: type-ahead
General rating: excellent adventuring

Atmosphere	94
Vocabulary	98
Logic	90
Addictive quality	97
Overall	**94**

HUMAN TORCH AND THE THING

Producer All American Adventures
Price **£9.95**
Author **Scott Adams**

Questprobe 3: *Fantastic Four, Chapter One* is the full title of this game which follows those other **Questprobe superheroes,** *Spiderman* and *The Hulk.* These games represent a link up between the inventive genius of the Marvel Comics Group, with its curious assortment of weird and wonderful characters, and the cunning and puzzle-minded deviousness of the Scott Adams intellect.

Whatever might be said of the adventure, one thing is certain: the theme of the game is totally absorbing. Within every young-at-heart person is a desire to know and learn all about superheroes. To be a superhero you must pos-



sess some extraordinary powers. With *Spiderman* it was the ability to cast webs and climb along walls and ceilings. With *Human Torch* it is the ability to throw flame and fly. The detail with which we are told of the superheroes' powers is part of the style of Questprobe, with comments like 'possesses the mental ability to control ambient heat energy' leading into a detailed synopsis of food-to-energy conversion via Adenosine Triphosphate (or ATP for short).

The Thing is aptly described because not only does he have an orange, rocky-textured hide, but also he has no apparent neck or outer ears. As all other superhero creatures, The Thing derives its strange powers from a blast of radiation whose mutagenic affects bestowed superhuman strength — to the point where Thing can lift 85 tons. The Thing's body is able to withstand extremes of temperature from -75 to 800 degrees F for up to an hour, and can withstand the explosive effects of armour-piercing bazooka shells against his skin without sustaining injury.



It is with some relief that the player finds The Thing's intelligence has remained unaffected by the radiation — it would be worrying in the extreme to have such awesome powers in the hands of a moron!

The adventure begins in the Chief Examiner's office, a character who 'appears to be a foreground, real-time, high priority task running on an unattended Master Computer located somewhere in an ancient, forbidden museum of science on Durgan's planet'. So now you know! If you get stuck on this first location I would strongly recommend a good think on how well prepared you are for this adventure because it doesn't get any easier. It is the sort of adventure which would be difficult even with the solution sheet!

To get over the first hurdle you simply have to do the polite thing which gets the Examiner talking thus: 'In this test you must free Alicia Masters from Dr Doom. You'll have to master the powers of two Marvel Superheroes. You'll be able to switch your point of view at any time'. The two characters he refers to are, of course, Human Torch and The Thing. Switching between characters involves finishing the line 'THING I want you to . . . ' with the word CHANGE which then gives you the line HUMAN TORCH I want you to . . . ' at the bottom of the screen. In this way you can switch between one and the other at will.

I'm afraid it doesn't take long playing this game before you realise how clumsily it has been put together. The glaring white background of the Questprobe series is still there, along with poor vocabulary and a linear set of puzzles to be solved. But what makes this game a little worse than its predecessors is its confusing responses and untidy display. The response of 'OK' to everything you input is simply nonsense. Early on in the game, in the tar pit, I decided to swim. The program responds to this with 'OK', so naturally I assume I am swimming out of the pit. But no, I'm being sucked down and the truth is the program has not acknowledged my 'swim' instruction. When changing from one character to the other say, Thing to Torch in the first frame, the program does not clear the screen and so 'I'm being sucked down' remains when it is clear Human Torch is outside the tar pit and is not being sucked down. Clearing the screen would have saved confusion here.

This is a very unfriendly and unresponsive adventure. Meeting the Blob provides as good an example as any of how the game fails to perform. EXAM BLOB gives 'OK, I see nothing special' while SMASH BLOB gives 'OK, it's clobbering time. I smashed my way through the machinery'. This curious stock answer refers to the machinery of one of the first problems in the tar pit. This reply is either a joke or a bug and I tend to think it's the latter. Questprobe has never had the reputation of friendliness, featuring challenging puzzles and stunning graphics instead. Here the pictures are only modest and the puzzles are more involved and bewildering than clever. I can't help thinking *Spiderman* was less difficult and had more going for it. This third release shows little care for what the British adventure market wants and I think it unlikely that people are that interested in mind-bogglingly difficult games constructed in such an uncaring fashion.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: extremely difficult
Graphics: quite good but nothing to shout about
Presentation: very average
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast
General rating: disappointing

Atmosphere	62
Vocabulary	51
Logic	55
Addictive quality	58
Overall	**56**

SPACE DETECTIVE

Producer Celerysoft
Price **£2.00**
Author **J Sharp**

With a name like **Celerysoft** these guys must have a sense of humour (they even enclosed a menu for celery au gratin which begins with the celery being boiled in a little salted water for 20-30 minutes).

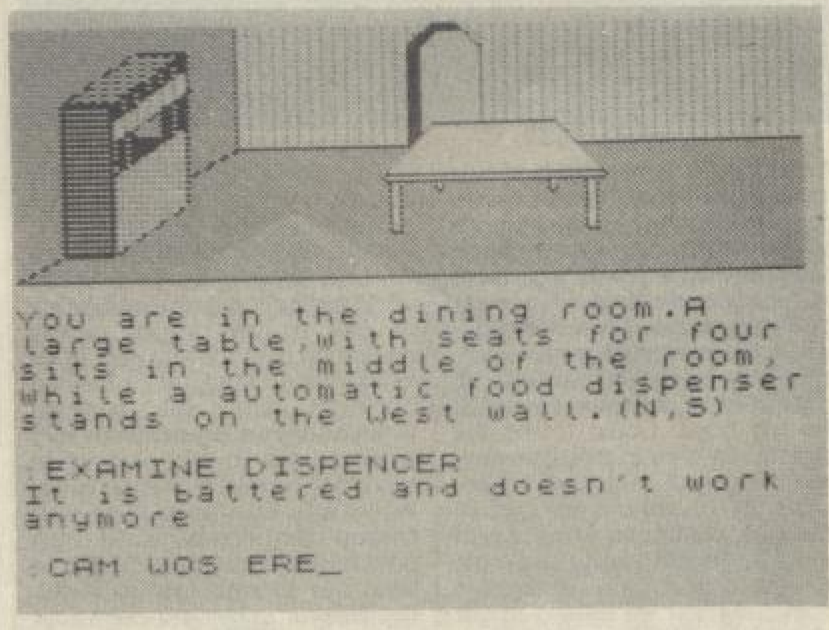
The F19 scout ship hangs limply in orbit over the planet Krepton on its mission to detect life on the barren surface (see what I mean, gave me a fit of the giggles, I can tell you). Yesterday all communications with the ship ceased and you are 'injected' into the back of the ship to find out what's up. You must return to the Inter-Galactic Control Base with the case solved. And why must you do these things? Because you are none other than the great SPACE DETECTIVE, that's why.

The crew onboard consists of Tobor Xod, captain of the F19, Astrid Tarn, scientist, Ojo Ojomoh, engineer, and Klepton Kyle, medical officer.

The game makes use of the *Quill*, *Illustrator* and *Patch* and it is *The Patch*'s sound effect (the one of the train) that is encountered in the engine room NE and NW of the start location.

to have a more imaginative reply to the one given. In general, there are very few occasions where comments are received unless they're along the lines of the solution to the game. When authors do not predict and think through how a game might be played, atmosphere is lost and the player settles down to a linear game characterised by a feeling of passive disinterest. In the Navigational Room, where there is a display screen, EXAM SCREE brings out one of the drawbacks to *The Quill*: the program assumes you are referring to something else when it comments 'The screwdriver is very small but will undo any screw'. A grill, a little distance away, is secured by screws and, what do you know, around the corner is a screwdriver to deal with them. Not so quick though, the grill is eight feet up and out of reach. But remember, the solution does not lie in getting the table or the seats!

Space Detective is a very run-of-the-mill adventure. Owing to its linear plot and solution pathway it lacks atmosphere. When a game is unresponsive it fails to keep the player enthralled. There is little story here, just a set of preset problems and solutions, which is a little disappointing when you con-



You begin at the rear end of the ship where a small light shines on the rear airlock. The picture above the text rather neatly depicts the scene and there's even some flashing indicator lights to liven things up a bit. To the north, along a gleaming white connecting corridor, is the dining room which has a large table, four chairs, and a food dispenser which is battered and out of action. It is here you get your first taste of the unimaginative plot behind this one: both GET SEAT and GET TABLE elicit 'You cannot do that' with no further elaboration. Now, I think it quite reasonable to assume the author must have expected the player to attempt to get these items and it wouldn't be expecting too much sider storytelling is what adventuring is all about.

COMMENTS

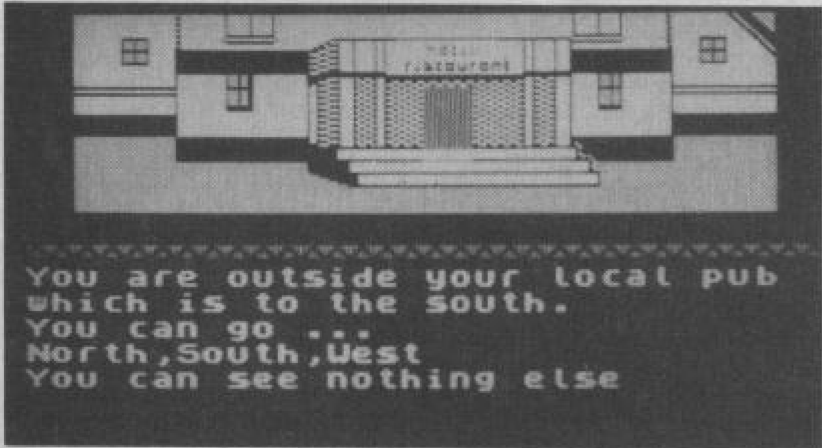
Difficulty: not difficult
Graphics: average
Presentation: Spectrum character set
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: *Quill*
General rating: poor

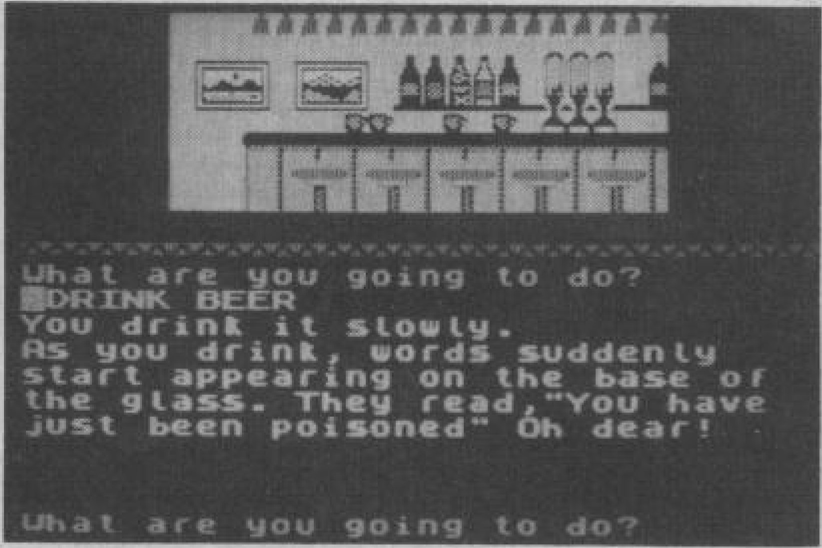
Atmosphere	30
Vocabulary	50
Logic	65
Addictive quality	45
Overall	**43**



THE PRISONER

Producer Stephen Preston
Price **£5.50**
Author **Stephen Preston**





A curious game this one, but I felt I must review it as it fares well when compared to the heaving mounds of poor quality cassettes I receive each month. Adventuring, more than any other area of games-playing, seems to attract the program yet to be signed up, or worse, sold only by mail order with no hope of being taken on by one of the big boys. Could I take the opportunity here to dissuade anyone thinking of writing an adventure who has not got any original ideas to contribute - even with humour, the old torch-plank-hole adventure with no interactive characters just isn't going to get anyone interested enough to buy it in sufficient numbers to justify the time and energy devoted to writing it.

The Prisoner is curious because it is put out by a person with no company name (no big crime this as many adventure houses centre around a single programmer). Further, LOAD"" "CODE is used to load it and, well, that really takes me back to the early days. What is unclear is whether the author has had express permission to use the copyright for the TV series. Up to a year ago, large entertainment companies were determined to stop unauthorised versions of their programs/books being used by small computer companies, but perhaps now they have become

This game acknowledges the copyright without saying whether or not it has been granted by ITC Entertainments, the owners of The Prisoner TV series. The reason why I labour this point is because of one or two similar games appearing over the last year or so which have clearly not obtained copyright and yet survived whereas any transgression by very small games in the early days tended to be met by a letter winging its way from some huge Hollywood film company. If large companies have decided to turn a blind eye to small games which digress from standard behaviour then this is only sensible as such games represent little threat, and if they do, they can always be officially endorsed!

The story of *The Prisoner* goes like this. You resign from your job in the secret service, but someone somewhere doesn't like it, and so they put you away (once a spy, always a spy?) You are abducted and wake up in a strange village filled with other people taken out of circulation. None have names, just numbers. You are Number Six. The village has a chairman and he is Number Two. His efforts to break you are not very successful, but then, neither are your attempts to escape. But one day the chairman hatches a plan to make you reveal your secrets whilst reading in the village. You go to the nursery to see the children. There you find a storybook with pictures - a game of cricket, a boxing match, a village, a plane and a lighthouse. You start reading, forming a story from the pictures, but beware, Number Two is watching.

The aim of this game (*The Girl Who Was Death*) is to track down a mad professor called Schnipps whose intent, in best mad scientist tradition, is to destroy London with a super rocket. The only way you can find and stop him is to follow his daughter (the girl of the title) to his hideout. She tries to kill you at every opportunity and can easily be recognised as she is tall and blonde, and always wears white. When you reach the hideout you have to find the rocket which is disguised as something rather peculiar and your task here is to deactivate it. There is a time limit of half an hour to complete parts One and Two of the game. When the time runs out, Schnipps launches his rocket and your mission fails.

You begin with a game of cricket. An agent who had followed this trail before you was on the trail of Schnipp's daughter but, whilst playing a game of cricket for the local team, he was suddenly killed by an exploding cricket ball, presumably swapped when the last Six was scored. This is your only lead. You start play with a game of cricket to try and find out exactly what happened.

It's a pleasantly warm day on the cricket pitch. Birds twitter above and the opposition has clocked up 99 runs (shown on the picture). And . . . you're holding a ball which is a bomb. Hmmm, I'll leave you to work out what is the best course of action here! If you choose the unfortunate combination THROW BOMB, you are still blown up as it reports 'No time for that! The ball you were carrying has exploded'. This is the first of many examples of narrow, unfriendly vocabulary as the next step, GET BAT, is refused with preference going to TAKE BAT. Game play is very unhelpful a little further on when you attempt to pick up a photo and are unable to as you are already carrying too much — a bat, a watch and an umbrella! The idea of carrying a watch in this sense is illogical.

The Girl Who Was Death is a very professional looking piece of software. The pictures at the top of the screen are very good (as is the loading screen) and the redesigned character set is most pleasant and readable. Both the theme and content are very interesting and absorbing for the player.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: not overly difficult
Graphics: good
Presentation: very good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast
General rating: good

Atmosphere	85
Vocabulary	52
Logic	65
Addictive Quality	80
Overall	78

SEABASE DELTA

Producer Firebird
Price **£1.99**
Authors **C Liddle & P Torrance**

If I give you the story for this one you might just twig what it is a follow up to. You are Ed Lines the famous reporter who has sent the 'SUBSUNK' message from the stranded submarine Sea Lion, only to have it intercepted by enemy agents. The agents use a mysterious magnetic force to draw the sub into Seabase Delta. You must unravel the secrets held in the base then locate a mini-sub and make good your escape.

You begin in a large tubular walkway (with a picture which looks like a large pencil) and through its transparent walls you can see the murky depths of the ocean. As is so often the case in adventures there is a dead body. By the body is a briefcase which mysteriously has to be re-picked up if it is opened to examine its contents. Presumably the program assumes you must lay it down



doesn't reveal anything in the first instance but does give a useful prompt to action — always a good sign of a helpful program. What isn't so helpful is the

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see something!'. It would have been courteous to allow the player to press a button to skip over this delay; as it is, the game slows and the player becomes bored and irritated. Overall the game has a sluggish feel, what with its slowly-drawn graphics, but this must be taken as just one of the drawbacks inherent in a £1.99 adventure.

In the briefcase are documents, one of which is a telex message which runs like this, 'We have captured another sub but all other personnel have had to evacuate the base due to a wildfire epidemic. I have managed to arrest the symptoms of the virus but I am still very ill. I have left the computer in control of the base in case I do not survive. The missile targeted on the British base will launch as planned'. If you've been following the story up to now you'll realise this is an enemy message and so it looks as if Ed Lines also has to deal with the enemy computer and stop the launch of the missile.

To the east of the first location is a food farm with a really messy floor, covered in very slippy seaweed, whose slimy composition has you sliding right round the place. You whizz past the table too fast to quite make out what object lies upon it. To the south is a metallic platform in a large dome which turns out to be a futuristic tube station with a tube car which can whip you off to many small locations strung out down the line. At each of these tube stops only one or two tasks have to be performed and, say, one item picked up. This area, for me, was one of the few boring ones; the constant need to fasten and unfasten the seat belt became irksome very quickly.

Seabase Delta is another good cheapie from the authors of *Subsunk*. As with that game, some of the pictures are rudimentary while others, especially some of the later ones, are quite evocative. The game is well-designed and has had a fair amount of imagination pumped into it. There are plenty of problems and a good number of objects to collect. In contrast to *Subsunk* this game has a very friendly vocabulary; getting things done is straightforward and there is space for witty comments: GET TORCH gives 'Well, every adventure's got to have one of these hasn't it?'. *Seabase* merrily flows along and can't be bad at the asking price.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: moderate
Graphics: good in places
Presentation: average
Input facility: v/n
Response: Quill
General rating: good

Atmosphere	68
Vocabulary	80
Logic	76
Addictive quality	75
Overall	**74**

SIGN STUMPS

Andrew Jacobsen *from Cottingham, North Humberside asks:*

" Please could you tell me how to get past, or destroy, the tank in ESPIONAGE ISLAND? "

In control hut TXJUDI TXJUDI, F, SFNPWF MJHIU, JOTFSU FYQMPTJWF, X, TXJUDI TXJUDI.

Ian Macmillan *of Sheffield is having difficulty finishing quite a few adventures and asks for help on the following:*

VELNOR'S LAIR
1) How do I kill Velnor? (For a friend)
2) How can I find the oars — where are they?
3) Is it worth crossing the crocs? Is there something I need?

GREMLINS
1) How do I blow up the building? What do I use?

SPIDERMAN
1) How do I stop/start the presses?

SHERLOCK
1) How do I explain to Lestrade about the sale of plans? (For a friend)
2) How do I get there? (For me)

Velnor can be killed in the same way as other denizens of the caves — by combat, magic or use of the wand. Being invisible will greatly increase your chance of success. The oars are in a fungi mound in the Troll room. As for the crocs river, it is necessary to cross it at some stage, as Velnor's lair lies in that direction.

To blow up the building in GREMLINS you must first cut up the mailbox into metal plates — for this you need the welding equipment. Now, using the plates weld up all the vents except one. When the Gremlins appear use the camera and they will flee into the open vent. Now weld this one shut and seal them in. Now return to the counter, plug in the drill and drill a hole in the metal plate. Now cut the plastic pipe from Tavern and join it to the pipe from the bottle. Insert the pipe into the hole and open the valve. Light the torch and get out!

To start the presses in SPIDERMAN, go to the computer room, TUBSU DPNQVUFS, UZQF SVO.

To inform Lestrade of the sale of the plans in SHERLOCK go to Scotland Yard and say to Lestrade " Basil has plans " then say " Sale location in Old Mill Road ". After this just follow Lestrade.

N. A. Garbett *from Sutton Coldfield is still searching for his own identity in MINDSHADOW and asks:*
1) How do you kill Jarad in room 207?
2) How do you get the parchment without dying?
3) What is the shell used for?"

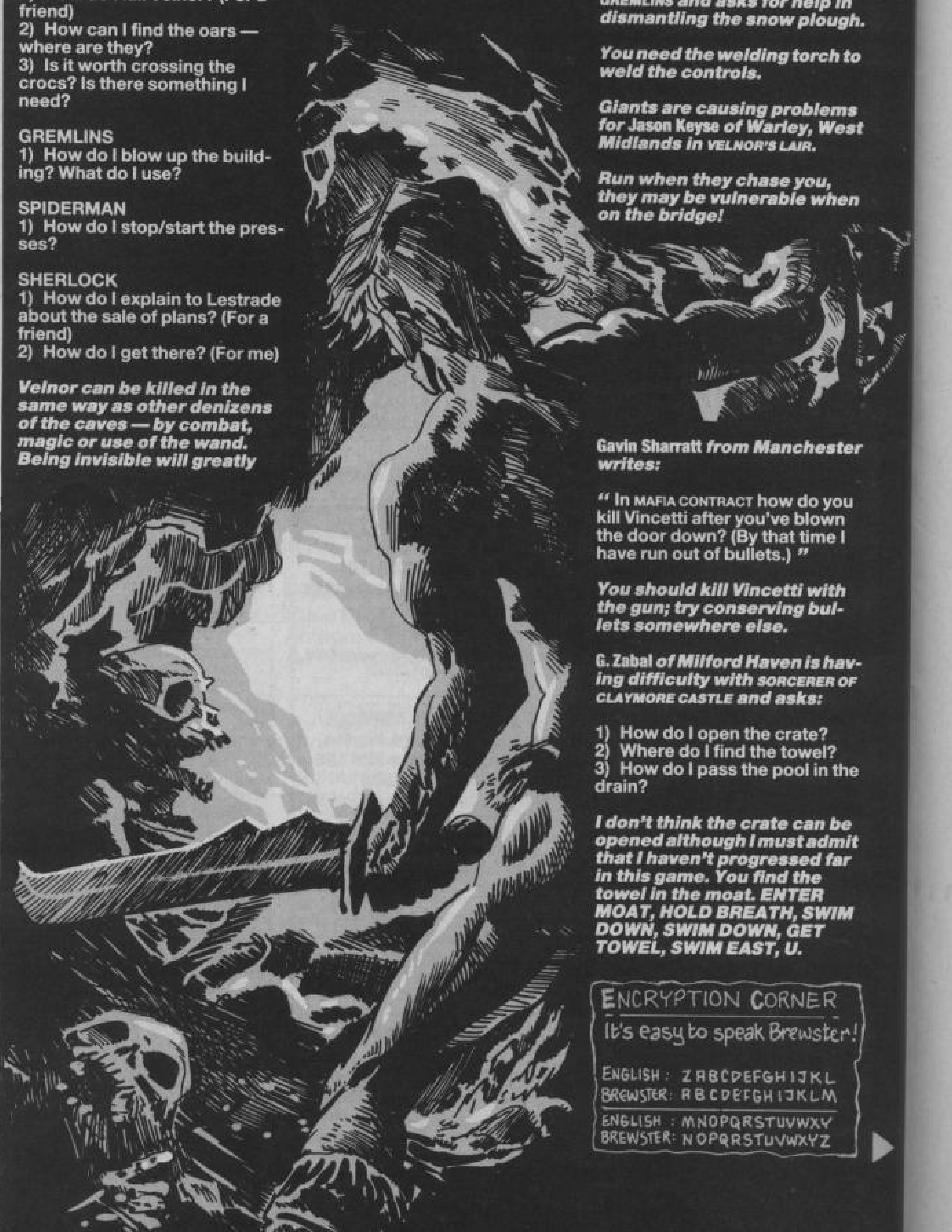
To kill Jarad you will need the gun. To get the parchment, simply duck when you hear the whirring noise. The shell can be used as a spade.

Stephen Linehan *in Manchester is sick of being run down by GREMLINS and asks for help in dismantling the snow plough.*

You need the welding torch to weld the controls.

Giants are causing problems for **Jason Keyse** *of Warley, West Midlands in VELNOR'S LAIR.*

Run when they chase you, they may be vulnerable when on the bridge!



Gavin Sharratt *from Manchester writes:*

" In MAFIA CONTRACT how do you kill Vincetti after you've blown the door down? (By that time I have run out of bullets.) "

You should kill Vincetti with the gun; try conserving bullets somewhere else.

G. Zabal *of Milford Haven is having difficulty with SORCERER OF CLAYMORE CASTLE and asks:*

1) How do I open the crate?
2) Where do I find the towel?
3) How do I pass the pool in the drain?

I don't think the crate can be opened although I must admit that I haven't progressed far in this game. You find the towel in the moat. ENTER MOAT, HOLD BREATH, SWIM DOWN, SWIM DOWN, GET TOWEL, SWIM EAST, U.

ENCRYPTION CORNER

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ENGLISH: MNOPQRSTUVWXY
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GLORIOUS MUD

Dear Derek
First — **Stephen Horne** is right, SIGNSTUMPS would be better with each tip titled.

Secondly, on the saga of computer adventure vs RPGs (Role Playing Games) I think that **Lew Pulsipher**, who used to write DAILOG back in the 1984 for IMAGINE, had the right idea when he said that computer adventures would always be sterile compared to RPGs because computer adventure didn't involve player interaction. The only computer RPG I know of is *MUD*. Apart from that, most computer adventuring is a solo affair.

However, I do not think computers should be ruled out from RPG because they could be a very useful Game Master tool. Where computers really shine is in very fast calculation and graphics. A Game Master tool would then include a system to instantly conjure up twenty thousand orcs, goblins, black puddings or whatever, without all that tedious mucking about with 8-sided dice, trying to generate Hit Dice. It would also give illustrations of rooms, dungeons, landscapes and so on to give the players an idea of where they are.

Dr Wad, Southampton

ABSTRACT PAINTINGS

Dear Derek
I am writing to express my views on adventures, though especially LEVEL 9. Their brilliant *Dungeon Adventure* was one of their first adventures but is virtually unheard of nowadays. Why? Because it hasn't any graphics is one of the main reasons. Another is that LEVEL 9 have produced graphic adventures since.

Look at *Red Moon*. The graphics are so brilliant aren't they? The variation is amazing. Room after room a poor picture of a door is displayed and the only time this changes is in the tilted room (a lop-sided door). The problem with LEVEL 9 graphic adventures is that the graphics are too abstract and have nothing whatsoever to do with objects or features in the text.

The only worthwhile graphics are those used in *Ashkeron* and *Kentilla* where the pictures reveal clues that are not given in the text. So, LEVEL 9, if you can't draw, don't try. If you can then draw pictures properly next time. Okay?

Turning to **Marc Stears'** letter in the May issue, I totally agree with his points on *Quill*ed adventures as they are often addictive, always fast, unlike *Lord of the (yawn) Rings* which I found very tedious.

Martin Bishop, Berkshire

LET ME EXPLAIN

Dear Derek
Following your comment regarding my letter in CRASH Issue 28, I think I'd better clear up one or two misconceptions.

I should point out that while you are obviously entitled to your opinion, as far as I am concerned *S&S* or anything with a similar concept is basically not a good game whether I opt to compare it with role gaming or not. I am unable to see the 'fun' in wandering about countless passages, killing things. Action-wise, an arcade game is more enjoyable; strategy-wise a wargame is more involved; puzzle-wise an adventure provides more challenge.

Which brings me onto my second point. As I said, *S&S* is not really all that similar to a 'proper' role-playing adventure. In fact I could quite honestly say that a normal computer adventure comes closer to the modern role-playing ideal due to more concentration on plot and so on.

As for 'beloved' role-playing games, as I pointed out, there is as much rubbish in this market as anywhere else. I don't just naturally assume that all rolegames are brilliant and all computer games are awful. After all, I do play and enjoy computer games.

Another topic of interest was that of graphics in adventures. I think the main point, not mentioned by **Richard Matthews**, is that if these games lacked graphics, far more of the actual adventure could be fitted in, which is surely what we want. Too much emphasis is being placed on attractive and novel presentation with the result, in some cases, that the rest of the game is ignored. Not that the extra memory space left by the absence of graphics should just be used to create more locations — there are other aspects that add depth to an adventure.

It was interesting also to see your response to **Suzi Yann**'s request for help, where you recommend drawing on fantasy and SF fiction for inspiration. This makes me think about the actual backgrounds which ARE used in adventures. There have, I admit, been numerous adventures which tackle new milieus, instead of just the usual fantasy vein. Many have been quite successful, and it is impossible to complain about the variety of backgrounds now being drawn on. However, I think that a lot of ideas within the fields of fantasy and SF still have not been developed. Much fantasy is now a bit stereotyped, but especially in the realm of SF, much remains to be done.

Brian Duguid, Aberdeenshire.

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Dear Sir
I was reading through an adventure column in another magazine, and I was surprised to see that the writer did not accept a game such as *Spellbound* as an adventure. I do not agree with this, and this prompted me to write on the subject of what constitutes an adventure, especially with new games of this type which, although executed with full animated graphics, are essentially from the same stable which bred the likes of *Adventureland*, *Colossal Adventure*, and *Mountains of Ket*.

There are several types of computer game which may get classified under the heading of 'adventure', and I would like to explain my ideas on a more consistent grouping of game types. I will use the term 'arcade content' below to mean 'manual dexterity on joystick/keyboard control of the game character(s)'. I think that there is one simple question to ask yourself when deciding upon the categorisation of a game, which I will explain after I have given some examples of the various groups.

First, games which are definitely not adventures, although they are sometimes described as such primarily because of the type of scenario. This category includes: STRATEGY GAMES — *Lords of Midnight*, *Doomdark's Revenge* ARCADE DASHABOUTS — *Sabre Wulf*, *Underwurlde*, *Nightshade*

Secondly, there are those games which masquerade as animated graphical adventures, but have a significant arcade content; any problems are either explained in the scenario and require simple physical coordination and timing on the part of the player, or are puzzles with simple or illogical solutions, often of the trial and error variety. This section includes: *Knight Lore*, *Alien 8*, *Fairlight*, *Batman*, *Avalon*, *Dragontorc*.

Thirdly, there is a group which might almost qualify as adventures, as they have good logical problems, but the arcade and/or animated graphical content is too critical to the enjoyment of the game. This section includes: *Herbert's Dummy Run*, *Three Weeks in Paradise*, *Sweevo's World*.

Fourthly, there is the group which won't cause any arguments — the true text-only adventures. This includes: *Dungeon Adventure*, *Lords of Time*, *Hampstead*, *Tower of Despair*.

There is a group I would describe as illustrated adventures, which includes games which have used pictorial



techniques to enhance the atmosphere of a game which could otherwise have been written text-only. This includes older games such as: *The Wrath of Magra, Eye of Bain.*

Those where the illustrations sometimes give important clues. Unfortunately, this opportunity for constructive use of pictures is rarely taken — I can only think of two such games: *Kentilla, Valkyrie 17.*

Also included here is the ever-increasing type of game where the illustrations are there to make up for the shortage of text (caused by the inclusion of the illustrations). Sometimes this succeeds in enhancing the atmosphere: *Ashkeron, Touchstones of Rhiannon, Warlord.*

Sometimes it fails: *The Hobbit, Red Moon.*

And sometimes nobody would notice if the pictures were accidentally left out: *Lord of the Rings.*

The sixth (and final) group is formed by games which I would describe as graphical adventures, and the grouping covers the area of disagreement as to what constitutes an adventure. This includes older games where the graphics were possibly not much more than an (enjoyable) gimmick, such as: *Valhalla, Crusoe, King Arthur's Quest*, together with more recent games where the graphics are vitally important to the game concept, text input often being totally dispensed with, but all the problems are in the true adventure vein. This section includes: *Tir na Nog, Marsport, Runes of Zendos, That's the Spirit, Riddler's Den, Spellbound.*

And the game which takes the concept of the true animated graphical adventure to a new peak, the brilliant: *Heavy on the Magick.*

One reason I think some people are averse to considering games like *Spellbound* and *Riddler's Den* to be adventures is that adventurers take themselves too seriously. They don't mind admitting to playing an adventure where they are 'Morthrak the Wise battling the minions of the Great Dark One in the Shadow Lands', but don't think it can be proper adventure if you have to be a short, fat knight with big feet, or an extra-galactic aardvark!

I would be interested to hear your opinions on this subject, as I feel sure that some of the games I have listed as graphical adventures would not have been included for consideration for review in your column. I'd also be interested to read the views of other readers.

Jim Grimwood, London E16

This month's £20 of software goes to JIM GRIMWOOD for his classification of adventures.
DB

AN IDEAL FORMULA

Dear Derek
I am writing to you concerning the state of adventures.

In the beginning there was the text-only adventure; then came graphics. At first graphics were poor and slow to appear but gradually they got faster. Later there was landscaping. 'Wow', everyone said, 'instant 3D graphics'. So everyone rushed out to buy the game (including me). Once they had actually played it, they realised it was boring and that you had to sit around for about ten minutes for day to break.

Did no one realise that this is not an adventure, this is a strategy game! I think the reviewers were all carried away with the graphics. After that came icon-driven games like *Fourth Protocol*, which is a very enjoyable game but I wouldn't call it a true adventure.

I have a wide range of adventures, and the ones I enjoy most are the graphic adventures, not the icon-driven games nor the landscaping games. Why? Because I class the graphic adventures as real adventures. Text adventures are usually good as well, except the budget priced ones.

Instead of worrying about the state of art, companies should make games with large vocabularies, original plots, artificial intelligence where possible, long descriptions for locations and, if a game has graphics, they should be worth looking at and if possible follow the lead set by *Valkyrie 17* or *Spiderman* where the screens change according to circumstances.

There is no reason why *The Quill* or *GAC* shouldn't be used if put to good use, like *Hampstead* and *Bored of the Rings.*

Jonathan Tubb, Bucks

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GRABBING THE TIGRESS BY THE TAIL

The games software industry began with designer-programmers, then the team approach evolved with designers, artists and programmers working together on projects. Some companies, such as Denton Designs, set themselves up to 'package' products — producing programs for other firms to publish. Tigress saw a gap in the market, and seized it firmly by the tail . . . JOHN MINSON investigates one hot, steamy, London day.

It is hot. I am late. I have already postponed this interview twice. Now it is four o'clock and I should be in Putney, South of the River. Instead I'm still in the West End.

Luckily **Tigress** is very understanding about it when I finally roll up, three quarters of an hour late, at their office eyrie. In fact they're so busy they're glad of the extra working time. Under the eaves it is hotter still but a glass of Coke is offered and gratefully accepted.

Tigress is Beth Wooding, David Bishop and Chris Palmer. They don't program; they don't publish; instead they just have ideas. At the time of the interview nobody had any idea that game design was about to become a hot topic in the pages of CRASH, thanks to Mel Croucher's outspoken views which appeared in the April issue.

Good old Mel, guaranteed to be controversial, had suggested to our beloved editor that, *'it's all derivative.'* And then the words that raised the hackles of so many readers *' . . . fourteen or fifteen year old programmers. They can only be derivative — it is impossible for them to come up with an original idea, absolutely impossible'*.

While I wouldn't go so far as Mel, I would agree that last year was a particular low as far as clone programs were concerned. If I was kicked in the teeth by one animated martial artist, I was booted up the behind by half a dozen.

Not all was gloom though. One of the high spots for me was THINK!, the board game that would be near impossible to play on a board. The more observant of you may have noticed the Tigress name on the box. It was a brilliant example of simple, effective game design. But was it an indication that the future of good games lies in specialist design teams? Spill the beans, Beth, and tell us how Tigress got its teeth.

THE BEGINNING

'We started up in March '84 as a promotional and marketing company specialising in the home computer market and we spent about a year doing that'.

At this point Chris Palmer takes up the story. *'When I joined these guys they were still doing marketing. I'd met David who was at the time working with the Hungarians, the Andromeda Software crew, and it actually started while he was sitting in my office and we both simultaneously said, 'what there is in this market is a need for properly thought out and designed games' '*.

So Chris left his job at Argus to put that plan into action and as Beth says, *'That's all we're doing these days.'* First out under the Tigress banner was THINK!, followed by GOLFING CONSTRUCTION SET, a Commodore 64 sport simulation which sadly depends on constant disc access, so is impossible to convert to the Spectrum.

But even before this, Tigress were involved with Domark on the VIEW TO A KILL tie-in — not that you'd know it from the packaging. That old favourite of the music biz, 'artistic differences' led to them disowning the much criticised title.

It's easy to believe that they were forced into passing programming that they'd ordinarily have rejected when you compare the game with their 'official' releases. The trio look upon the experience as something of a lesson, albeit a painful one. Happily they now avoid such marketing pressures and currently have nine games under development.

IN THE TANK

I'm fascinated by how a games design Think Tank works though. Do they just sit around having good ideas all day long? Chris explains:

'We work in one of three ways. A design will come out of our deranged and fevered imaginations, usually as an initial five minute or half an hour burst of 'Wouldn't it be great if we could do this'. The David and I get together and fire backwards and forwards and build the initial idea of the design.

'Or a company will come to us with an idea, such as 'We want a golf game' or 'We decided our range is lacking a strategy game' or whatever and they might give us a very broad outline. Or people have bought the rights to a book or a film and have come to us saying, 'Can you design a game round it?' though that's a minority.'

Then comes the stage when the idea has to be bound by the practicalities of the micro. *'When we began doing this we set ourselves an initial rule,'* says Chris, *'that we would design games first and foremost.*

CLASSIC VALUES

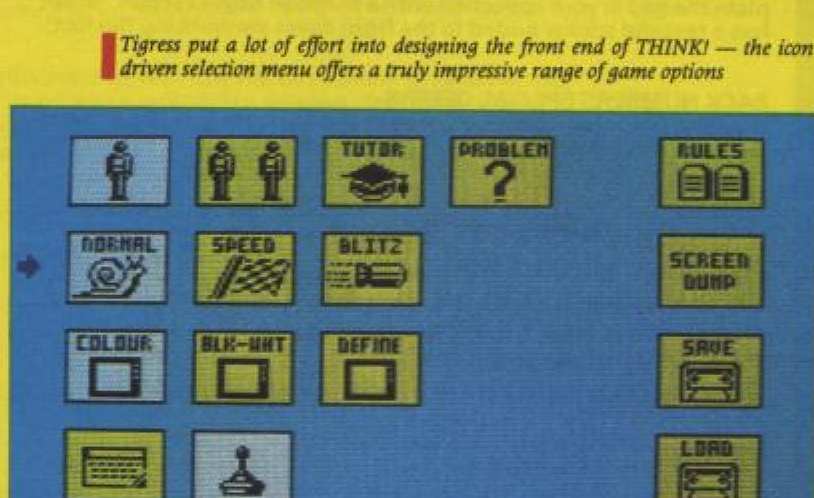
'We try to make everything we design have the classic enjoyment values; that it's fairly easy to learn yet the skills and challenge ramps up in accordance with how the player is doing at the game. And then we will look at the best way to implement that on a system.' Then, smiling, he adds, *'But we do have a huge ideas file that's simply waiting for the hardware market to catch up with us.'*

Once the storyboard has been constructed it's time to find a publisher. Sometimes a design suggests a publisher, though more often it's a case of being approached by a company with a general enquiry or making a presentation of several possible ideas.

Next comes the preparation of a technical brief. This document breaks down every single aspect of the game and lays it out in terms that a programmer can code. A simulation game would need various mathematical models as well as the more up-front graphic designs, for example.



Tigress put a lot of effort into designing the front end of THINK! — the icon driven selection menu offers a truly impressive range of game options





A snap stolen from the ZZAP! files to illustrate the action in GOLF CONSTRUCTION SET. Sadly, not a game that will find its way onto the Spectrum. Designed by Tigress for Ariolasoft, the game allows you to design your own golf courses as well as load in famous courses to play round.



Beth Wooding sorts out a spot of creative angst in front of Mr Minson's camera, as Dave and Chris pretend to be at loggerheads in a posed photograph taken by MINSON's WACKY SNAPS Inc. Minson refuses to go away unless you strike a daft pose for his lens, you see.



Chris Palmer, Beth Wooding and Dave Bishop in their usual office environment — the best creative thinking always goes on in garrets.

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

But even then Tigress's involvement is not over. Liaison with the programmers continues throughout. *'Obviously there are times during the design where you had to make an assumption about technical feasibility or there are two ways of going about something. We'll be on hand all the way through programming to sort out those problems.'*

Chris is the only one of the three with programming ability, having started on Commodore Pets, many years ago, and though Tigress don't themselves program, these skills are useful when liaising with the writers, or come in handy when mock up screens are needed for the initial presentation of an idea or routines need to be cobbled together to test techniques.

David Bishop, who has until now been sunk in work at his desk, is now drawn into the discussion. According to Beth, he does nothing else, other than play games. *'I spend most of my evenings and weekends playing. I'm a chess and a bridge addict.'* Beth too is a card player, and her previous job, merchandising Walt Disney characters, brought her into contact with the games world.

'We have to look at what else is around,' David calls across the room. *'We've spent a lot of time recently looking at Macintosh, ST and Amiga stuff.'* Certainly the office shelves are filled with programs, and Beth adds that as many again are back at David's house. *'You pick up 'feels' from playing games,'* Chris says, *'as to what feels good and what doesn't.'*

FAVE RAVES

When it comes to favourite programs, Beth nominates RAID OVER BUNGLING BAY by Broderbund. *'I think mine is MULE by Electronic Arts,'* David says. *'In fact I know it is.'* But Chris is less sure. Apart from his own THINK!, which amid much laughter he claims is, *'one of the most classic games of all time'*, he finally chooses SPINDIZZY.

When it comes to what gives them most pleasure to design, Chris waxes lyrical, much to the amusement of the other two. *'Because we approach each game as an entity, they all hold both an immense amount of pleasure and an immense amount of pain.' 'You sound like a sort of software midwife,'* David shouts. *'Sometimes it feels like that,'* Chris laughs.

'We try to make every game a progression from what we've done. And if we're working within a generic class, such as an arcade adventure, we'll look at that genre and decide if there are any elements that haven't been fully exploited or fully explored, so we try to make a progression there. We get an awful lot of pleasure out of coming up with a novel way of doing things or a novel twist.'

There's a lot of satisfaction for David when they finally have something up and running. This early form of the final game program will have all its variables left open so that they can be fine tuned. *'That, to me, is one of the most rewarding bits because I can't program, but to be able to actually affect a program that someone has given me is great.'*

'Yes,' Chris agrees, *'And it's great when you first show it to people and see their faces light up.'* But Beth is more down to earth. *'I like to see the money in the bank.'*

It can take quite some time before that happy day though. How long from the first light bulb over the head to handing over a finished product? *'As long as it takes,'* Chris replies. *'It really depends a lot on the project. GOLF took thirteen to fourteen months, though that was exceptional. They usually run six to nine months.'*

SIXTEEN BITS?

Though the team are currently keen to write for the new generation of 16 bit computers — the Amiga, which they think is superb but has yet to prove itself in the marketplace, and the Atari ST range, which Chris considers will become the new workhorse of micros, they still see a future for the humble Spectrum.

'There's still an enormous number of Spectrums out there,' Beth observes, *'and the age range we're appealing to can't afford to buy Amigas.' 'And whenever somebody brings out a piece of software and everybody goes, 'This is it — the peak,' you still find that a couple of months later there's something else that makes you think, 'How did they do that?''*, adds Chris. *'And even if it has been pushed to its technological limits there's still a huge pallette that we can use inside that without the need to bust through a brand new technical innovation on it.'*

So even though there are frustrations working with the machine's constraints, Chris reckons that providing you come down to earth, they shouldn't be too bad. If he could advise Alan Sugar on a redesign for Christmas though he would add more memory and disc drives for multiple access. In the end though, it all comes down to good game design, and that's the thing that will extend the life of the machine, not copies of classics from the cliche hall of fame.

The aim of Tigress is to be known for quality and innovation though they still see the need for the designer/programmer because, as Chris explains, *'Some things can only come together from that high level marriage of knowing the nuts and bolts internally of the machines.'*

UNCLOUDED VIEW

'But we have seen specialisation within the market with publishers getting better at marketing the games and the programmers getting to know the machines. By taking the design thing outside of all that we get a high degree of objectivity, unclouded by either extreme.'

'Even though initial reactions from programmers may be that a proposal is impossible, on thinking about it they will find a way, which pushes game design beyond the limits they set for themselves.' Chris expects to see more specialisation in the future.

Inside it is still sweltering, but before we depart for the cooler afternoon sun and some wacky pictures, Chris shows me two games that will be appearing on the Spectrum over the next few months. Both are for **Ariolasoft** — one a complex arcade game with startling 3D graphics; the other a strategy game with a most unusual theme. More I cannot say or Beth will throw me to the company tiger, but both upheld all that had been said during the afternoon.

Yes, Mel, there is a lot of rubbish out there. But there are a lot of rubbishy books and films and records too. While there are design teams like Tigress to take a fresh look at old ideas and push forward the boundaries of what we do with the Spectrum, rather than just its technical limitations, then there's hope for the machine for a long time to come.

1986 PBM MAILBOX

BRENDON KAVANAGH gets into his stride this month, taking a look at a couple of games that might serve to whet the appetite of the Play By Mail Novice . . .



I hope that my introductory article to the PBM MAILBOX last month served to strike a few sparks of interest in the wonderful hobby of Playing By Mail among CRASH readers. In this month's MAILBOX I've taken a look at two games which have provided and introduction to the hobby for many PBMers, the best established of the two being Vorcon Wars **by Vorcon Games. I have just joined a new game of Vorcon Wars and, provided I survive the first few turns, I'll be filling you in on my progress in future MAILBOXes.**

There is a great variety of PBM games about, but you will find me mentioning the computer moderated games a bit more than the others — human moderated games tend to be role playing games (RPGs), and if you enjoy RPGs then you can read about them in other magazines! If there are any games that you have heard of and would like to know more about, please write to me at PBM Mailbox in CRASH Towers and I'll attempt to include details in a future column.

IT'S A CRIME!

KJC Games moderate this low-priced game in the UK under licence from the American company, **Adventures by Mail.** *It's A Crime!* was designed with new players in mind, although it is challenging enough for experienced players.

Set in New York City in the late 1990's, the game takes you into a world where drug-crazed street gangs have grown in power and mob rule is as strong as that of the police. You play the part of a gang leader, with the ultimate aim of becoming the Godfather — which can only be achieved by making your gang as powerful and notorious as possible. The scenario of the game requires the player to get involved in some very illegal, and on occasions rather anti-social activities and playing the game could cause offence to some people, depending on your viewpoint. I won't go into detail here, but if you want to find out more, the rulebook can be acquired free of charge from KJC Games.

KJC has over 3,000 people playing in *It's A Crime!* — by far the most played game in the UK. The game is run on Apricot Xens by eight staff, and KJC hope to transfer the game software onto a mainframe linked to a laser printer in the near future. The hope is that the game will bring new blood into the PBM hobby and expand the industry; I wish KJC luck!

The game is very original and too young to have acquired a rating from the FLAGSHIP readers — I'll pass on details of the ratings it receives in due course. Although a good strategy is essential to do well in the game, I am not convinced that *It's A Crime!* is necessarily as good an introductory game as claimed because of the belligerent playing attitudes it encourages. If you get the rulebook then feel free to let me know what you think.

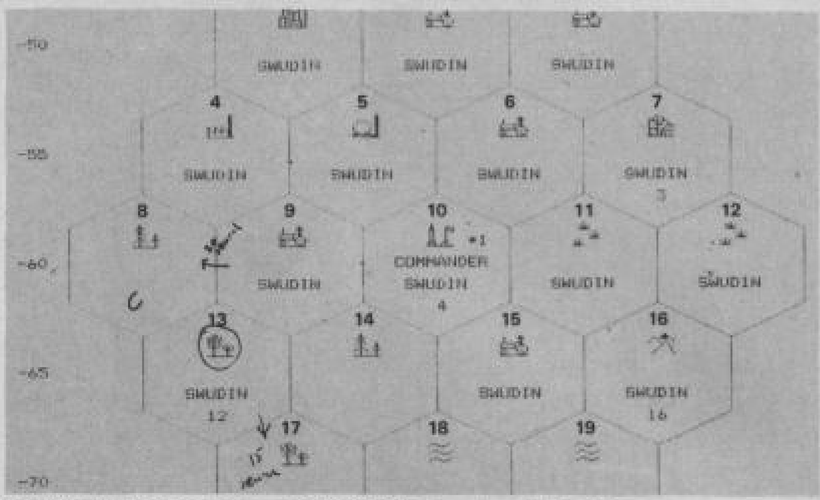
As a special offer to CRASH readers, KJC games are giving away a free rulebook, startup printout and (should you choose to play) credit for two free turns to anyone interested. If you would like a package, then send a large SAE to: **It's A Crime! PBM MAILBOX, CRASH, PO BOX 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.**

After startup, each turn costs sixty-two and a half pee. Please bear in mind that this game may be found offensive by some people — playing the role of a criminal of the future involves some nasty work, and the game isn't really suitable for young children. If you don't like the idea of the game, don't play it!

MICRONET FREEBIE

Chris J McCarthy, **an old PBMer and a nominee for the 1986 Player Of The Year (POTY) award, has asked me to mention his FREE PBM page on Prestel for those of you on Micronet. Until late July his Gallery page number is 323000088, meanwhile you can always MBX him on 919996034.**

VORCON WARS



Playing under the name of SWUDIN, Brendon fights his way through VORCON WARS. This turnsheet arrived at Chateau Kavanagh, and relates to the Sixth turn in the game. Working notes on the turn sheet reveal that Brendon decided to move searchparties of 20 men from Hex 9 to Hex 8, and 15 men from Hex 13 to Hex 17.

This is one of the most popular PBM games on the market at the moment. Designed, written and run by **John Nicholson** (founder of VORCON GAMES, the company which moderates the game in the UK), *Vorcon Wars* is a strategy game moderated using a BBC Model B. In the game, sixteen players compete in an attempt to gain control of the planet Vorcon, annihilating the opposition in the process. The planet surface is split into nineteen hexagonal zones, each hex representing an area of land of a specific type. Each land type has its own function: for example, if your troops capture an agricultural hex, then that hex provides your command ship with a specified quantity of food supplies each turn. There are eighteen types of hex, including sea, swamp, city and atomic-industrial zones.

You, as the player, are the commander of an expeditionary force sent from your homeworld to conquer Vorcon. Under your command you have troops and various resources. Combat in *Vorcon Wars* takes place by deploying a specific number of troops to the hex that you wish to capture. Then a battle takes place between the attackers and defenders of the hex until one side surrenders. The outcome of combat depends upon the size of the opposing forces, their combat orders and land defence factors such as minefields, fortifications and terrain.

By capturing the right type of hexes and building up the right resources you can begin to develop spy satellites (to reveal the power of your opposition), rockets and nuclear missiles.

Vorcon Wars is a very challenging game to play, and encourages the use of complex wargaming strategies as well as enjoyable diplomacy. A large number of people have been brought into the hobby by playing this low-priced game and, to date, battles have taken place on over sixty Vorcon planets. A game can last for anything between one and three years.

If you want to try your hand at PBM then this is the game I would recommend you to sample first, since it develops all but the role-playing/fantasy aspects of PBM — you'll soon learn just how well allies are to be trusted! On first reading, the rulebook makes *Vorcon Wars* look ominous in complexity but after a few turns you should find your feet. John Nicholson is a good, fair and friendly GM who is reknowned for his sporadic hints and tips to new players.

To join *Vorcon Wars*, send £1.50 to: **VORCON GAMES, 59 Juniper, Birch Hill, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 4ZG.** This covers your introductory package and first three turns. Initially the turnaround is fortnightly, but there are weekly ('Quick Turnaround') games for experienced Vorcon players. Each turn after the initial three costs £1.00.

THE RATINGS SCHEME

FLAGSHIP, the PBM magazine has kindly allowed us to borrow their ratings for games reviewed in this column. Four out of the six ratings are derived from votes cast on a scale of 0 to 10 by readers of Flagship — which is the fairest rating scheme available.

DIPLOMACY: The amount of diplomacy needed for successful play; ranked on a scale of 0 to 5

COMPLEXITY: A game's complexity, ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most complex

The FLAGSHIP Readers' Ratings

GM QUALITY: Reflects the standard of GMing (0 to 10)

DEPTH: How detailed and involved is the game? (0 to 10)

INTERACTION: How much player interaction is there? (0 to 10)

VALUE: Value for money (0 to 10)

THE FLAGSHIP FACTORS

DIPLOMACY	3
COMPLEXITY	3
GM QUALITY	8
DEPTH	6
INTERACTION	7
VALUE	**9**


ocean
ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
U.S. GOLD
All American Software
They sold a
MILLION
They sold a
MILLION II
BRUCE LEE
PSION
match point
MATCH DAY
4
MONSTER
HITS IN
1
GIANT
PACK
The Hit SQUAD
STRIKES AGAIN
ALL THESE
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TOGETHER ON ONE
GIANT
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AMSTRAD £9.95
COMMODORE 64 £9.95
DISC £14.95
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TECH NICHE



OFFICE MASTER OR JACK OF ALL TRADES?

Centresoft is currently selling a suite of office programs from **Gemini Marketing Ltd**. The package is in fact a compilation of Gemini's earlier stand-alone business programs and includes CASHBOOK and FINAL ACCOUNTS, DATABASE, MAILIST, HOME ACCOUNTS, STOCK CONTROL, GRAPH PLOT and EASILEDGER. All applications are programmed in BASIC and therefore are not the fastest thing on the Spectrum. The display and feel of the program are rather dated, but a fair amount of colour has been intelligently incorporated and from the accounts point of view, the system is faultless.

Rather than argue about the merits of running accounts and databases on a 48K Spectrum, it is left to the reader to make a decision on the basis of what the programs can and can't do. Personally, I don't think it viable to run accounts on the 48K Spectrum due to the limited memory, awkward keyboard and slow storage facility. No doubt, I shall be getting letters from serious users, who will disagree with me and who will display all sorts of real world applications. Perhaps I am spoilt by the availability of an APRICOT XEN in the office, but I shall try to disregard this privilege and look at the individual applications in detail.

All programs can be run off cassette or Microdrive and printout is either via 32 column ZX/Alphacom or 80 column printer with suitable interfaces. The manual does not try to introduce the user to the art of accounting, so previous experience of the pencil and paper method is a prerequisite. This package is NOT an integrated accounts package — ledger activity, nominal accounts and trial and final balance are run separately.

CASHBOOK ACCOUNTING

This program keeps track of nominal account balances including VAT details and generates and updates the required datafile which requires saving and loading for each session. The same file is also used for the final accounts for the printing of PROFIT AND LOSS and BALANCE SHEET accounts.

The data file does not keep record of individual transactions, but only the cumulative totals of the accounts. A facility is therefore provided for printing out all batch information for a complete audit trail. The program is configured to accept a maximum of 70 transactions (payments, receipts, and so on.) plus another 70 journal entries per session. Transactions are entered in batches (25 per batch) with a maximum of 10 batches. After these maximum entries, the user is prompted to print out the batch details and to save the nominal accounts on a data file.

The transactions to be entered should be prepared into manageable batches with the inclusion of the batch date, a batch number, the control total and the number of transactions. The control total is a safety measure, as the computer calculates and display its own total of the batch — a discrepancy indicates an input error, which can be corrected prior to saving the datafile.

A grand total of 88 nominal accounts are provided which include amongst other things an analysis of four different sales groups and three different bank accounts and most of the usual credit and debit accounts. At any time CASHBOOK allows the VAT details to be reconfigured, which is useful if the VAT structure has changed or new rates have to be applied. There are four choices which cover non VAT registered companies, businesses with zero rated inputs and outputs only, those with zero and standard rate inputs and outputs and businesses with multirated VAT systems (up to 3 rates including zero rated). Provision is made for users requiring to analyse the gross purchases for resale between the various VAT rates.

The main menu provides the key to the entry of CASH RECEIPTS, CASH PAYMENTS, BANK RECEIPTS, BANK PAYMENTS and JOURNALS. The journal entries are useful for entering adjustments to produce the final accounts. This can be for debtors and prepayments, creditors and accruals, closing stock and work in progress, depreciation, disposal of fixed assets or hire purchase adjustments. Separately, there is provision to update MEMO ACCOUNTS which do not form part of the trial or final accounts, but are available to store information required to complete the VAT returns.

Several display and printout options are available. On demand CASHBOOK displays the list of nominal accounts, the list of memo accounts and the VAT summary (which includes the memo accounts). The current batch details and the trial balance can also be sent to a printer.

FINAL ACCOUNTS

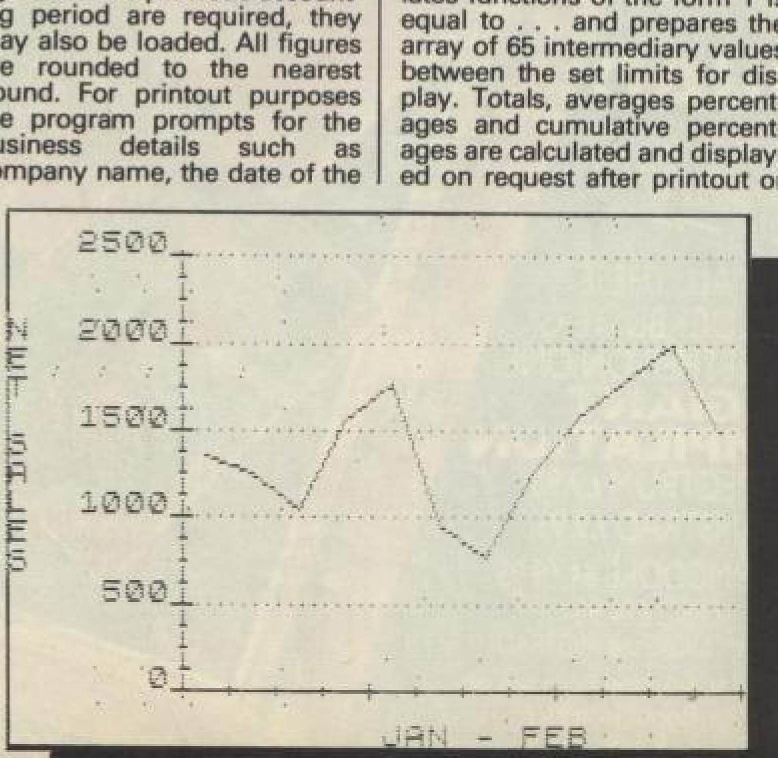
The final accounts program works with the datafile created by CASHBOOK. If comparative figures of the previous accounting period are required, they may also be loaded. All figures are rounded to the nearest pound. For printout purposes the program prompts for the business details such as company name, the date of the accounts, the account period, the title for the current period and the title for the comparative period.

FINAL ACCOUNTS can generate the trial balance, the trading account (Profit & Loss), the Balance Sheet and the VAT summary. After printing the Profit & Loss account the profit or loss must be distributed between the capital accounts of individual partners in the business. The Balance Sheet can only be printed after the printing of the trading account, as the net profit figure must be available.

GRAPH PLOT

This is a graph plotting package which can either work with the datafile created by CASH BOOK or any other system generated arrays in the form DIM a(n) for histogram or Pie charts with n data or DIM a(2,n) for point or line plots. Data may also be input manually and saved with GRAPH PLOT's data save facility is required.

Making use of the high resolution and colour, GRAPH PLOT displays numerical data in various forms such as histograms, line charts, pie charts and X/Y point and line plots. It also calculates functions of the form Y is equal to . . . and prepares the array of 65 intermediary values between the set limits for display. Totals, averages percentages and cumulative percentages are calculated and displayed on request after printout or



CHEAP & CHEARFUL LTD. BALANCE SHEET AT 01.04.86	1985 £	1984 £
FIXED ASSETS	50500	30950
Goodwill	2000	2000
	52500	32950
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank (2)	500	-
Cash	500	200
Stock & WIP	5000	3000
Debtors/prepa	2000	4000
VAT recoverab	500	-
	8500	7200
Less CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Bank (1)	34400	8250
Creditors/acc	9300	3300
Other loans (	-	2000
Hire purchase	800	1000
VAT payable	-	600
	44500	15150
NET CURRENT	(36000)	(7950)
NET ASSETS	16500	25000
Represented by:		
Capital A/C 1	13900	15500
Capital A/C 2(	1400)	4500
Long term loa	4000	5000
	16500	25000

display of the graph.

All graphs feature autoscale to make good use of the available space and prompt for title, dimension description and so on. The data may be plotted as individual amounts or as a cumulative sum. The scaling and presentation of the graphs may be altered by the user by changing the origin and or lengths of the X and Y axis.

The pie chart, which is used for single dimensional data, has the ability to explode individual segments for highlighting. A maximum number of 18 segments can be displayed. For histograms and line graphs the limit for screen and printouts is set to 192, although the package will cope with up to 2500 data items. Only with the X/Y line and point plots can all 2500 pairs of data values be plotted.

All graphs may either be displayed or copied to printer, as can the analysis of any graph (which may also be saved to tape) giving a full breakdown of the data, together with totals, averages, percentages and cumulative percentages.

EASILEDGER

This program provides sales and purchase ledger facilities and copes with up to 800 transactions on the 48K Spectrum. The transactions can be credit sales, payments for credit sales, cash sales, credit purchases, cheque payments for credit purchases or other and bank deposits. Invalid transactions may be deleted from the ledger. EASILEDGER provides several listing and printout options. BANK SUMMARY lists all bank transactions and displays the final balance. FINANCIAL SUMMARY lists the totals for sales, receipts, purchases and payments for all transactions on the file. LIST JOURNAL screens all the transactions indicating transaction number, transaction type, account name and order/invoice number. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE screens all credit purchases and ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE all credit sales. ACCOUNT SEARCH is a an intelligent account enquiry, which only requires part of the name string to be entered. The program and data can be saved to tape or Microdrive and a new file option clears the ledgers of any transactions.

STOCK CONTROL

STOCK CONTROL features a range of functions for adding to, amending and displaying stock information. Up to 992 records can be held within the 48K Spectrum. All stock records are accessed by a reference code entered by the user during the item entry. Program and data are stored together and when reloaded the program automatically runs with the current data. The main menu displays the options of adding a stock item, changing a stock item and deleting a stock item. Stock details entered are the reference code (1-6 characters), description, supplier, unit quantity (dozen, set, or whatever), units in stock, cost price per unit, sale price per unit, minimum stock level and reorder quantity.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY gives the total cost value of stock, the total sales value, the overall gross profit margin based on the first two figures and the cost of new purchases based on the individual reorder quantities of stock below the minimum stock level. LIST STOCK RECORDS provides a further submenu, which includes BROWSE RECORDS (Q and W to move forwards and backwards through the file), SCREEN A SINGLE RECORD (called up with the reference code), SCREEN STOCK SUMMARY (16 records a page), PRINT SINGLE RECORD and PRINT STOCK SUMMARY. STOCK REMOVED/RECEIVED provides entry of stock movements and UNDERSTOCKED ITEMS provides a list of stock items below the minimum stock level. NEW FILE initialises all information in the file and deletes all current records. ZERO STOCK QUANTITIES retains the record details but sets all stock quantities to zero. WRITE FILE ON TAPE saves the program and data to tape.

MAILIST

MAILIST allows the storing, amending and retrieval of names and addresses which are held permanently on tape. Up to 200 records may be held in the 48K environment. The main menu provides options for adding records, browsing through the file, changing, deleting and finding records using one of the ten fields of the record as a search key. The records contain the name, title, company, address1, address2, town/city, county, post code, telephone and a 16 character searchkey string, which can be used by the user to identify individuals by credit worthiness, rep area and so on. The print options include routines for label printing: setting up the label format, printing a test label, printing a range of labels and printing selective labels. Also available is a telephone list printout. The program and data can be saved to tape for permanent storage. Last but not least a sort routine is provided, which enables the complete file to be sorted under one of the ten field headings.

DATABASE

This program provides a card index system. Up to ten alphanumeric or numeric fields may be specified and a total of 30K is available for the complete file. Calculations may be performed on numeric fields and a sort routine is provided which may be used on any field. The main menu provides options to add, change or delete records in the file. FIND/SORT RECORDS includes not only the sort routine, but also a find substring facility (operating from the first character position onwards only). TOTAL ITEMS BY FIELD calculates and displays the grand total of the field for the entire file. The records may be listed on screen or printed. CREATE NEW FILE clears out all records from the file.

HOME ACCOUNTS

This program provides a record of your home budget estimates and actual expenditure and keeps a record of all transaction to and from the bank account. The budget headings may be set up by the user, as appropriate. Provision is made to alter the budget estimates as well as the actual expenditure, view the budget with the display of actual and estimated figures for each heading colourcoded blue if they are equal, red if the actual figure is greater and black if it is smaller than the estimate. The monthly accounts can be plotted in histogram form. A set of banking routines is included to enable to enter credits, enter payments, provide an account summary and to carry forward balances for the next period. Again, START NEW FILE initialises and clears the budget and banking data and dimensions new headings, while WRITE FILE ON TAPE saves the complete program with budget and banking data to tape.

CONCLUSION

OFFICE MASTER certainly packs in a lot of useful application programs. The CASHBOOK and FINAL ACCOUNTS certainly are very solid programs which can provide a structure for very sound accounts. The speed is as could be expected from programs written in BASIC, but as long as the files are not too large, the programs can provide reasonable service.

At £15 on cassette or £17.50 on Microdrive, GEMINI offers a complete accounts package including cashbook and final accounts, ledgers and stock control, mailist and graph presentation. As an extra you get a general purpose database, home accounts and a multipurpose graph plot utility. The individual programs may not be the hottest thing on a Spectrum, but given the restricted market for this application (on a Spectrum) that really isn't to be expected.



MIDI INSIGHTS FROM MORECAMBE AND TUNEFUL SOFTWARE

This month, JOHN BATES casts his eye over another music utility for the Spectrum — from COSMIC POP — and solves the 128K's mysterious Z Code conundrum with a little help from a reader in Morecambe

OLIVER'S MUSIC BOX

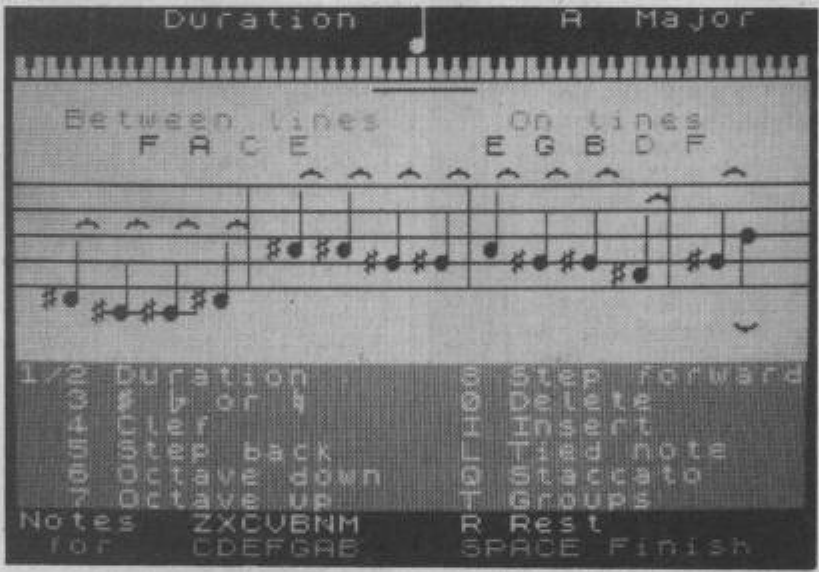
Producer: Cosmic Pop
Retail price: **£11.95**
Author: **Malcolm Shykles**

This is another program that is designed to let you input music in conventional notation form and then play it merrily back. It features a good set of readable music graphics and can cope with the efforts of the less musically literate who are given lots of on-screen help. All the weird and wonderful complexities of music that musicians tend to require are also catered for. However, the software does have one or two oddities! After a neat loading screen the menu appears with the usual options: write your tune, edit it, play it back, store and load from tape.

WRITING

If you are yer average beginner then the 'enter new tune' part of the program couldn't be more helpful. There are on-screen displays of time and key signatures that take a lot of the worry out of selecting which one you require. Whilst I was able to select any key signature, the on-screen help only gave me the keys using sharps. All sharps and flats were shown against the note rather than at the beginning, as a proper key signature. With a scrolling screen this was not such a bad idea as you are able to spot the sharps and flats immediately without having to remember the key signature.

The display has a miniature keyboard running across the screen. This looks pretty but is in fact mute. It could have been made to light up as the note is entered at the appropriate key. Notes are entered, by the way, from the lower two rows of qwerty keys. Like several other programs of this type, a set of stickers or an overlay would have been more than welcome; I predict a busy time ahead with scissors and sticky tape for purchasers. Each note is entered from the qwerty keys: by depressing the note value key crotchets, quavers and so on flip round in the upper part of the screen. You pick which one you want and each note beeps as it is entered.



The display is limited to a miserly one octave in the treble clef. To get outside this range the program has to be told to go up or down an octave — the number of octaves you have moved is shown by an arrow against each note. It is very easy to forget which octave range you are in, and as nearly all tunes wander outside the bounds of a single octave you are constantly dodging about from octave to octave, which is a mite frustrating. It also makes the displayed tune very difficult to read, which rather defeats the main object of the program. Perhaps it would have been better to have a two octave range available to work in.

In the writing mode there are plenty of options to insert and delete notes at any point. Notes can be tied together and, yes, I couldn't get my version to untie itself at all, so I was left with tied notes ad infinitum. *Oliver's Music Box* can play staccato notes (a musical term that means short and spiky); oddly enough there is no option to do the musical opposite — legato: (smooth notes), which was a bit of an oversight.

More niggles: any decent music writing program should have a copy and repeat facility. That is to say, any part or all of the tune can be copied to another section and any defined section can be repeated a number of times. This saves lots of tedious rewriting of the same notes over and over again. Unfortunately this facility is lacking.

EDITING

To correct bum notes you select a 'step-back' option. However my version replayed the whole tune minus the last note. This process was also repeated when the 'delete 'option was selected. Not so good.

Having completed your merry tune the editor mode allows a final check, playing through whilst flicking each note on screen as it is encounterd and played. Great, but if a bungle occurs you can't stop it playing and displaying, which rather hampers speedy corrections — you have to wait till the whole tune has played through, by which time you've forgotten where your mistake was as it has disappeared off screen!



PLAYBACK

There are two distinct ways of playing back the tune. One merely plays it back with no notation displayed. Fine. The other plays it while flipping through the on-screen pages of manuscript. This causes an unfortunate and perhaps unavoidable hiccup in the tune — the central processor stops playing for a fraction of a second and scurries away to flip the screen. I suspect the prime aim is that you can accompany the tune written with another instrument whilst reading it off the screen. If you are unable to play along in any particular key, the tune can be transposed for you, accurately and with the correct display.

Having played and checked through your ditty you can save to tape and grab a hard copy from a printer. One problem I encountered was that it proved very easy to lose hours of work by accidentally going into the new tune mode rather than the editing department, thus instantly wiping what was written in. Definitely a need for a safety catch here in the form of a confirming yes/no prompt.

CONCLUSION

Oliver's Music Box has been designed with more than half an eye on the educational possibilities to be had from playing along with your Spectrum. Hence the different playing and editing modes and copious on-screen information. However, despite its musical accuracy and helpful nature, the program fails to achieve its object because of the rather annoying hiccups and peculiarities that it contains. Some of the editing features refused to work as promised in the instructions. The stubborn way in which it only displays one written octave of music is a major shortcoming — playing along with it or reading the notes is a real pain as you have to look at little arrows all over the place to see if each note sounds as it is written. All in all the concept is good but in its present form the program is a bit self-defeating.

The *Music Box* comes complete with a selection of tunes that must have been culled from a recorder primer. Fair enough, but they do go on a bit, especially the the minute ragtime pieces and Sousa marches. Not really a selection of music to galvanise you into action. What's more, once each one starts you can't stop it . . . If some of the features were tidied up, *Oliver's Music Box* would be quite good. I understand that a 128 version is in the pipeline, which could be lots more fun if a few wrinkles were ironed out during the conversion process.

Cosmic Pop, P.O. Box 475, London E4 9UD

UNRAVELLING THE WEB OF 128 MIDI

Cast your mind back. In the May issue, I mentioned that the workings of the MIDI facilities on the 128 Spectrum were not only elusive, but well nigh impossible to fathom. For those of you who are now having hypnotherapy for migraine caused by too many late nights trying to get to grips with the MIDI capabilities of Sir Clive's final Sinclair product, help arrives courtesy of **S J Normanton** from Morecambe.

The slim instruction leaflet that expands on the Spectrum Plus Manual that accompanies the 128 sadistically recommends that you consult your synthesiser handbook and insert a 'Z' command in front of the relevant number — the number being one of the special MIDI codes. What was woefully omitted was that this has to be inserted in front of each byte of information. As some of the commands can use up to seven bytes, this becomes a tedious process, as our MIDI-magician from Morecambe explains . . .

To send a basic common control message, usually only two or three bytes are required:

eg
1) Status byte 1011001
2) Second byte 0000001
3) Third byte 01111111

'Z' value
Z177
Z1
Z127

This example code would switch on the Vibrato on an instrument connected to MIDI Channel 2. To send, for example, a system exclusive message to a Casio CZ-101 to alter the tuning (called Key Transposition), the final 'Z' Codes are:

Z240 Z68 Z0 Z7n Z65 Zxy Z247

where n is the MIDI Channel number and xy is the New Key note number — remember that the programming codes start at 00, so Channel 1 is 00, Channel 2 is 01 and so on.

The 'Z' supplies the start and stop bits that all MIDI systems expect — the 128's system only accepts numbers expressed in Base Ten, so binary control codes quoted in handbooks or MIDI protocol tables have to be converted into Base Ten for use with the 'Z' Code system.

So much for progress! This sort of caper makes spending a hundred pounds or so on an interface seem a positive joy. Apparently 'SJ' (why so formal? — you're among friends) added pounds to his telephone bill and put suitcases under his eyes getting this together, so we shall all, with one accord, face Morecambe and wave a big Thank You.

TICKLING TASWORD AND CREATING NEW CHARACTERS . . .

Our resident TASWORD fan, DOMINIC HANDY borrows a dot matrix printer from the office and has some fun with a new utility for users of the well-established Spectrum wordprocessor.

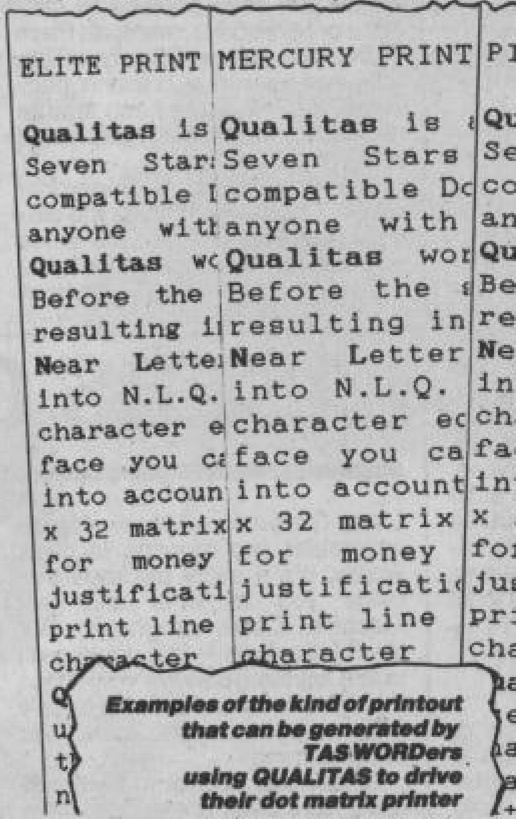
Qualitas is another useful little software add-on from **SEVEN STARS PUBLISHING.** With Qualitas and an EPSON RX80 compatible dot matrix printer, using quad density graphics allows you to print text that would make anyone with a more expensive printer very jealous indeed. *Qualitas* works by doing a double pass of the print head. Before the second pass a very small linefeed is carried out, resulting in the second print pass being offset, creating output that comes close to that created by a Near Letter Quality (NLQ) printer.

Besides adding a NLQ emulation mode to your printer, *Qualitas* includes a printer character editor which permits you to design typefaces to your own specifications. Suddenly, a straightforward RX80 printer become capable of doing wondrous things, even joined up print! The editor takes into account the double print pass and gives you a maximum 16 x 32 matrix to design your character on.

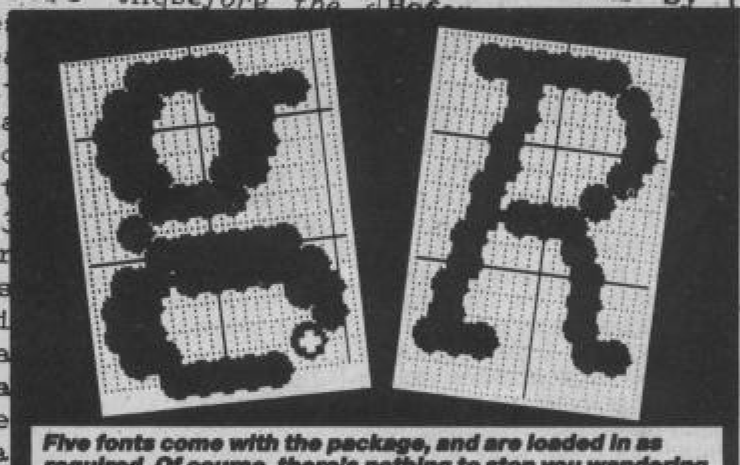
SEVEN STARS have also included their much praised justification program in the package, which makes it excellent value for money. This automatically justifies the print line by spacing the words out with pixel accuracy— a major upgrade on the character space justifying employed in *Tasword II.*

Although *Qualitas* overwrites the *Tasword II* HELP pages you can still use the emphasise and underline printer tokens. The character editor is straightforward enough to master, and the output that can be generated, with the right character set, should make quite a few daisywheel printer owners green with envy. This is an essential piece of software for anyone with an RX80 printer and *Tasword II — Tasword III* owners needn't despair too much: a version for their program should be available by the end of July for £8.95, or as an upgrade from the *Tasword II* version for £4.00

Seven Stars Publishing, 34 Squirrel Rise, Marlow, Bucks SL7 3PN
Price: **£7.95**



Examples of the kind of printout that can be generated by TASWORDers using QUALITAS to drive their dot matrix printer



Five fonts come with the package, and are loaded in as required. Of course, there's nothing to stop you wandering round in the font editor and coming up with a custom face . . .

NEXT NICHE . .

Next month we should be able to bring you the results of FRANCO FREY's experiments with a new video digitising package from SUNSET. The package includes hardware which allows you to capture images from a video recorder — or a video camera by preference — and software which allows you to play around with the grey scales in the picture once it is in memory. Franco has had hours of fun digitising piccies of his favourite film stars and is set to bring a full report on the equipment into the office in time for the next NICHE. We've just heard about a new kind of printer ribbon that allows you to make iron-on T Shirt transfers, so it may be possible to wear your face on your chest!

Meanwhile DOMINIC HANDY has got his hands on a copy of *The Word* from THE EDGE and is champing at the bit to provide a run-down on Spectrum word processors. We've saved the review of FREL's *Digit* Spectrum Plus keyboard kit for the wordprocessor round up, so you'll just have to wait a mite longer for that one!



A physog stashed away inside the memory of a Spectrum and output via a standard dot matrix printer — the kind of thing you can get up to with SUNSET's £129 video digitising equipment

TECH TIPS



Stardate: some time after the copy deadline! Simon Goodwin's mission: to boldly (and italically) report on POWERPRINT, to debug LASER GENIUS, and to seek out Strange New Graphics on the Spectrum 128.



Cast out that expensive typesetting equipment — let's produce CRASH the POWERPRINT way!

POWERPRINT II — HEADLINE NEWS

Powerprint II is a graphics package for the artistically inept. You can use it to design signs, business cards, banners, price tags, tickets, wallcharts and just about anything else that revolves around text, boxes and borders rather than free-hand drawings. It's incredibly easy to use and great fun.

When I received *Powerprint II* for review I was less than enthusiastic. It's the program BUTTERCRAFT SOFTWARE use to design their adverts, which always look pretty tatty. Having used the program, I've changed my mind. This package is so friendly, and so flexible, that it deserves the attention of every 'serious' Spectrum user.

Powerprint II is pretty useless unless you've got a printer, though you could perhaps use it for video titles. I tested it with a humble ZX Printer, but it will work with any printer that can COPY the Spectrum display. It can be easily converted to run from Microdrive; instructions are provided.

CRUSHPROOF CASSETTE

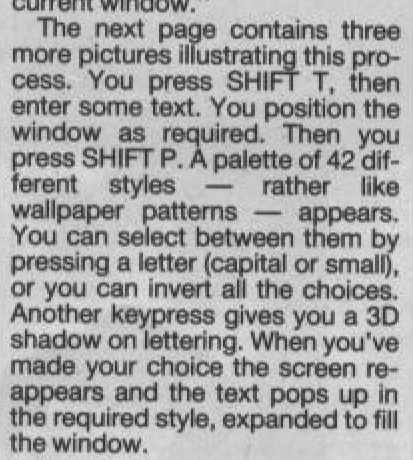
The 16-page manual, in a crushproof cassette box, is quite stunningly effective as an introduction to the program. The first page contains three pictures, and text designed with *Powerprint*.

It explains that you select the place on the screen where you want text by moving a blue rectangle, called the print window. You can change the size of this rectangle from one character-square to the whole screen, with four keys. Another four keys move it around the screen. "Think of it as a sort of adjustable 'rubber stamp' that you can set to any size or position", the manual suggests. "Whenever you press the PRINT control, any text you have previously entered expands to fill the current window."

The next page contains three more pictures illustrating this process. You press SHIFT T, then enter some text. You position the window as required. Then you press SHIFT P. A palette of 42 different styles — rather like wallpaper patterns — appears. You can select between them by pressing a letter (capital or small), or you can invert all the choices. Another keypress gives you a 3D shadow on lettering. When you've made your choice the screen reappears and the text pops up in the required style, expanded to fill the window.

WINDOW BOXES

The basic shape of characters is taken from one of five character sets, including bold, extra bold and outline letters. You can add up to four character sets of your own, which is a good thing as the standard ones are not brilliant. The characters are expanded to fill the window, and the pattern is overlayed on top, to give zillions of different styles.



You can also fill a window with a pattern. If you then fill the middle with nothing, you get a decorative border. Lines can also be drawn at various offsets around a window. You can invert the contents of windows, swapping Ink for Paper and vice versa, and clear windows or the whole screen. Naturally, you can COPY the screen to your printer at any time.

As befits well-designed software, any command can be undone by pressing 'U' if it has an unexpected effect. This facility is vital.

You can save screens to cassette or Microdrive, and load them so that you can use *Powerprint II* in conjunction with a drawing package like *The Artist*. Each feature is clearly and concisely explained in the manual.

The final option is *Superprint mode*. This lets you scale the display up by a factor of up to 32 times vertically or horizontally (or both) before printing it out. The printout is in sections, with dotted lines between them; it's up to you to stick it all together.

SIMPLE PROGRAM

The program is simple — a mixture of BASIC and Machine Code — and it can get confused if you press EDIT while entering text, but the ergonomics are generally very good ... in fact this is the most friendly utility I've ever used. It has the same sort of appeal as throwing paint pots against a wall, but the results are better!

I found it very easy to use *Powerprint*. The results are a bit tatty, because the package is based around a Spectrum screen-sized window and monospaced 64 pixel characters (zoomed up as required), but the sheer entertainment value of this package makes up for its ultimate limitations. If you want to learn about layout, or you just want to have some fun doodling, *Powerprint II* is great.

LASERS ON STUN!

Laser Genius is a Machine Code assembler and monitor. In other words, it's a utility package that helps you to write and test Machine Code programs. But don't fall asleep — this package is unlike anything else we've seen on the Spectrum, and it could have a major impact on Z80 assembler programming.

Since 1982 Spectrum programmers have been presented with a flood of assembler and monitor programs. The early utilities were so limited that it became de rigeur, for a while, to write your own assembler almost as soon as you'd learnt Machine Code!

Despite all of this effort, the products were much of a muchness, and differed mainly in presentation rather than content. Among the best of an indifferent bunch were HISOFT's ugly but workmanlike *DevPac*, and PICTURESQUE'S *Machine Code System*. HISOFT scored on features and PICTURESQUE on presentation. Both systems are commonly used by Spectrum software houses; but all that could change with the arrival of *Laser Genius*.

The package is split into two parts — an assembler and a monitor. The first lets you enter programs and translate them into Machine Code. The second helps you to test your programs, find bugs and correct them.

For £14.95 you get two cassettes and a 150 page A5 manual, in the inevitable video box. The box looks almost identical to that of *Laser Basic*, so you'll have to look closely to find this one in the shops. *Genius* (originally called *Magus* in Sinclair advertising) runs on all models of the Spectrum, except the old 16K model; a special 128K version is promised but has yet to arrive.

TAPE CATALOGUE

The two parts of the package are recorded on different tapes. On both my copies, Tape 1 contained the files intended for Tape 2, and vice versa! OASIS have promised to sort this out.

The first tape holds the assembler, some utilities, and a set of example programs written in assembly language and **Phoenix** — a new low-level language.

The second tape contains two versions of the monitor, to load into either the top or the bottom of memory on a 48K machine. A relocator is also provided for awkward people who'd like to put the monitor somewhere inbetween.



The LASER GENIUS Monitor in action, as captured by an ancient ZX Printer

THE ASSEMBLER

The *Laser Genius* assembler lets you type in programs and store them on tape or Microdrive. It uses a neat 42 column display, which is handled a little more slowly than the usual 32 columns but still acceptably fast. QL and Enterprise fans will be pleased to discover that labels can be up to 240 characters long, but unchuffed to learn that they can't use underscore characters between words.

There's a full screen editor, and you can even scroll back over past entries. All of the usual commands are there — search, replace, copy, move, renumber, delete, list and print. You must divide your code into numbered paragraphs, each of which can be up to 1K long.

The assembler is very large — maybe too large to suit cassette users — and you're limited to about 16K of text unless you start to shed features. In practice this is not too much hassle as assembly code is stored in a concise, tokenised form. You can get as much in memory with this package as with its competitors, as long as you don't include lots of comments.

Once the buffer is full you can use a ***INCLUDE** command to fetch instructions from a tape or Microdrive file. This has two limitations — ***INCLUDE**s cannot be tested (so one file can't **INCLUDE** another) and the amount of tape-fiddling needed is horrendous if you want to assemble to and from cassette. Text is loaded in 2K chunks and you have to swap and stop tapes throughout the assembly process. This is fairly automatic — although slow — when using Microdrives.

The assembler has all the bells and whistles you might expect; it allows macros with parameters and local labels, arbitrary arithmetic and conditional assembly. There's also a library manager built in, which can be persuaded to automatically include pre-written subroutines as required. You can print or interrogate the symbol table to find out what goes where. There's also a neat integer calculator, with support for most number-bases.

Machine Code can be sent to a file or to memory; the format of code files is non-standard, but OASIS supply a conversion utility and you can always drop out to ZX BASIC and save code from there if you wish. You can tell the assembler to generate code for a given address but store it somewhere else — this is vital, given the size of the assembler. Sadly, there's no option to produce self-relocating code.

The assembler error messages are adequate but not outstanding — it's annoying that mismatched ENDs and missing parameters stop the assembly at once, without any check for further errors.

PHOENIX

The icing on the cake is *Phoenix*, a low-level language which can be mixed into assembly-language programs. *Phoenix* is a simple language, with support for integer variables, one dimensional arrays, loops, tests, pointers and expressions.

Laser Genius translates *Phoenix* instructions into a mixture of in-line code and subroutine calls. The **LIB** command adds the required subroutines to your code file. The results should run about as fast as code from a simple **Forth** or **Integer BASIC** compiler.

Phoenix looks pretty nasty — like a cryptic cross between Tiny **C** and Pidgin **Fortran** — but it's certainly useful if your programs contain lots of non-time-critical arithmetic and data-structure access.

CONVERSION PROBLEMS

If *Laser Genius* is going to succeed it is going to have to convert users from other assemblers. The **LOAD ASCII** command is meant to load assembler files from other packages, but it stubbornly refused to work on my Spectrum. I spent several hours trying to load cassette files from *DevPac* and PICTURESQUE's assembler, and got nowhere.

The instructions didn't seem to make sense and I got some weird results, including an endless stream of blank lines (even after I stopped the tape) and a mysterious 'expression too complex' error where no expression had occurred. OASIS insist that they've tested this facility — I say don't rely on it.

THE ANALYSER

The *Laser Genius Monitor* is quite amazing. The best feature is called the 'analyser' — a program that interprets your Machine Code in slow motion, checking its behaviour as it runs. It's a sort of glass computer — you can watch the current instruction, register values and memory contents change, and pause the program at any point.

Conditions — expressed in Machine Code or a version of **Forth** — can be set, so that the computer automatically stops whenever a certain address or area of memory is read or written. If you know that your program is overwriting something it shouldn't, the analyser will find the cause.

Virtual screens are allowed, so the analyser display doesn't have to mess up your graphics — the computer will swap the entire screen contents, or any window, depending upon what's running.

STACK CHECKER

There are some neat examples in the manual, including a fiendish routine called the 'stack checker' which monitors **CALL** and **RET** instructions, stopping if you ever try to **RETURN** from a subroutine without a sensible return address, generated by a **CALL**, on the stack. You can have up to ten conditional tests working at a time. Register values, flags, opcodes, addresses or whatever are checked after every instruction, so the code runs slowly, but this is a small price to pay for a crash-proof program.

You can write checks to ensure that code is not over-written, and you can use a back trace to find out how a program reached a given point. Conditions are easy to enter and easy to edit. They can only be one line long, but may contain calls to other routines in **Forth** or Machine Code.

THROUGH THE SQUARE WINDOWS

The monitor display is normally divided into four areas: a register list, memory display, output or disassembly window and an area for commands. As in the assembler, each line may hold up to 42 characters. Some instructions use the whole screen and re-draw the four areas when you enter a new command.

The monitor occupies about 15K of memory, so you can't use it at the same time as the assembler. It supports all the features you'd expect, with the exception of symbolic debugging — you can't use labels and data names from your assembler program when testing. This is a missed opportunity.

However, the built-in disassembler will produce files containing made-up labels that can be loaded into the assembler. This is very useful if you lose your source file or want to steal someone else's code! You can also tell the disassembler about data areas, so that it doesn't try to interpret them as code.

You can stuff bytes into memory, copy blocks, assign registers by name, search for strings, fill areas and compare blocks. You can swap register-sets, or ROMs, and turn interrupts on and off. Values can be stacked or unstacked, and there's a **Forth**-style backwards calculator in which you put numbers before operations, so that (**EVAL 2 2 3 + *** will display 10 (2 plus 3, times 2 — geddit?)). You can choose your favourite base for arithmetic.

There are 8 normal breakpoints available, as well as the ten STOP points. Code runs at full speed between breakpoints. You can step through programs one instruction at a time, with an option to interpret ROM calls or execute them without stopping.

Programs don't have to stop when they reach a breakpoint. You can make them stop after a certain number of loops, or switch into slow (analysed) execution at a given point. You can have the register or memory display, or both, updated between certain instructions, so that you only have to pay attention while critical code is being executed.

With the whole display re-drawn after every instruction, and a single slow breakpoint, you can analyse one instruction per second. If you just update the register display this rises to three instructions per second — a comfortable speed for humans. The analyser can get through about 200 instructions per second if you don't bother to have the screen updated.

FLAWED GENIUS

The manual is the worst part of the package. OASIS have never been very good at documentation, as they admitted when I visited them a couple of months ago. Their latest attempt is better organised than that provided with *Laser Basic*, but it's still an amateurish effort — chaotic, verbose, and dull to read.

The print is black on dull blue paper; this is meant to discourage photocopying without making the text unreadable, and it's certainly an improvement upon the trendy bright green of previous offerings. There's a fairly comprehensive index at the back of the book — hooray! There's also an enquiry card, which you can send off to OASIS if you need more help. You must use the card, to prove that you've got a kosher copy of the package; a replacement is sent with the reply.

The first really annoying thing is the fact that Amstrad, 48K and 128K Spectrum users all get the same manual. Throughout the text there are notices saying 'Amstrad Tape Users' and 'Spectrum Mic-

rodrive only'. The information is muddled together, often in the same paragraph, and sometimes there are references to Amstrad options with no mention of the Spectrum equivalent.

The comparative programming examples are only listed in Amstrad BASIC, with a glib notice to say that they can 'easily' be converted to run on the Spectrum. There's no explanation of the workings of WHILE..WEND, nested IF..THEN..ELSE, and the Amstrad PLOT command, so Spectrum users who are unfamiliar with other versions of BASIC are going to have problems. This is just lazy, especially as there's blank space to be taken up at the back of the book.

The manual can't make its mind up whether to be a tutorial or a reference guide. There are some diagrams and lots of useful examples, printed in a contrasting typeface, but the core of the book is simply a list of the commands and facilities available. This is too much information for anyone to take in as a constant stream.

At the end of each half of the book there's a collection of appendices listing keys, commands and error-messages.

There are some silly typos, like repeated references to a need for 10241K of memory! Some commands are referred to long before they're explained, and the order in which topics are discussed leads to problems: for instance, there's a table of 20 arithmetic operators in the section explaining how the editor works. One of the editing keys is wrongly documented and another (TAB, Shift 9) isn't listed at all.

Most of the information you need is in the manual, although there's an annoying lack of information about compatibility with add-ons such as disk drives and printer interfaces. The package works well with Microdrives and adequately with tapes; the assembler loading program will make a Microdrive copy for you, but you have to make up your own loader for the monitor, using addresses in the manual. There's no support for disks at present — an awful mistake, in my view. OASIS say that they've had lots of enquiries and may produce an OPUS disk version.

It seems that the package is compatible with the ZX printer (just) or any other printer connected to ZX BASIC stream 3. The manual only mentions the KEMPSTON interface, but I got a ZX LPRINT working without any problems. I'm told that the Interface 1 serial port will also work if you open it from BASIC before loading *Laser Genius*.

GENIAL CONCLUSION

This is a complicated package, and the documentation makes it seem more so. In its present state, *Laser Genius* is not suited to the beginner but the experienced Machine Coder should be able to work it all out after a few days of frustration.

Laser Genius deserves to be a real success, but it is let down by three things: the manual, the apparent lack of compatibility with other packages, and the lack of support for disk users. We'll keep you posted if OASIS manage to sort out any of these problems.

In technical terms *Laser Genius* is streets ahead of the competition, and should make it possible to write programs on the Spectrum which — previously — would have simply been impossible to test and finish properly. If you can already program the Spectrum in machine code, and you've got a Microdrive, I'd recommend this package. At £14.95 it is good value for the monitor alone.

TASWORD TIPS

Paul A. Cooper, an extremely Grande Formaggio who purports to run the Italian branch of the Ford Motor Company, has written in bemoaning the lack of 'serious stuff' in CRASH. The fact is that fun is what the Spectrum is best at, and CRASH has always reflected that. In TECH TIPS, TECH NICHE, CRASH COURSE and elsewhere we cover things other than games. There are uses for the Spectrum around the home, but — other than learning or game-playing — they're few and far between.

A lot of rubbish has been written about diary programs, central-heating control and the like. We cover new applications — like car fault diagnosis, video digitisation, Micronet and so on — as they appear. We're not going to run program listings, except POKEs and snippets to illustrate a point, because the only sensible way to distribute software is in a form where the machine can read it directly.

TASMAN'S POKES

Anyhow, at one point in his letter Paul asked for some *Tasword* Tips, so here goes; **Martin Reid** has sent in some word-processor POKEs which he got from TASMAN themselves. All of these should be entered from BASIC, after *Tasword* has been loaded.

You can get pound signs as well as hashes, on printers that support both characters at once, by POKEing 58117 with your printer's code for a pound sign.

To change the border colour, POKE 64516 with the colour number (0 is black, 1 is blue and so on).

To set the ink and paper colours, take the paper colour you want (0 to 7), multiply it by eight and add the ink colour (again, 0 to 7). The POKE the result into 58522 and 58513, and POKE the previous two bytes with 54, ie POKE 58512,54: POKE 58521,54.

JAMMIN' THE JOYSTICK

I've had to abandon testing the AGF radio controlled joystick I collected at the last Microfair. It seems — daft though this sounds — that the review model is prone to the effects of radio interference generated by the computer!

Anyone who has tried to listen to the radio while computing will know that the machines spit out quite a lot of bleeps and crackle — indeed the standard Spectrum is banned in the US, where radio interference laws are stricter than they are here.

In the case of the AGF unit I found that the receiver gave almost random signals unless I put a tin tray over my computer. Even then it didn't seem to receive messages from the joystick. AGF's answering machine is chewing this one over at the moment, and I hope to bring you a further report next month.

120 COLOURS ON A SPECTRUM!

This month's Techno-scoop comes from **Barry Adams**, who sent in a faded, barely-legible listing a couple of weeks ago that promised to put 127 pure colours on the Spectrum 128 display — without using alternated dots — and the option of more than two colours per character without colour-clash! After inviting us to send him a straight-jacket, Barry listed a short program which — to our amazement — worked, so we're sending him £20 worth of software instead.

We're re-listed his program here. It only runs on the Spectrum 128, because it works by switching between the two possible display areas many times a second. One area (at 16384 — the usual place) holds one picture, while the 128's 'second screen' at address 49152 holds a second picture which is displayed intermittently. The two blur together, giving a display where the colour at any point is a mixture of the hues in each display area.

You can use this to draw static pictures in 120 colours, or you can draw a background in one screen area and then move graphics through the second, getting an overlay effect that does not suffer from the usual Spectrum restriction of only two colours per character-square.

This is not a new trick — I can remember trying it on the normal Spectrum screen, using a block-move instruction to change the colour attributes 50 times a second — but it works much better than before on the 128, because the extra hardware allows extremely fast flipping between screens. There's still some flicker, more noticeable on some colour-pairs than others, but new colours are quite clearly discernable.

```
10 CLEAR 32767
20 FOR X=32768 TO 32849
30 READ Z
40 POKE X,Z
50 NEXT X
60 RANDOMIZE USR 32768
100 DATA 1, 253, 0, 62, 23, 237, 121, 33, 0, 64, 17, 0, 192, 1, 0, 24, 54,
240, 62, 204, 18, 35, 19, 11, 120, 177, 32, 244, 1, 0, 3, 17, 0, 216, 33, 0,
88, 121, 230
110 DATA 127, 119, 121, 15, 15, 15, 230, 127, 18, 11, 120, 177, 35, 19,
32, 239, 1, 253, 127, 30, 23, 237, 89, 118, 123, 238, 8, 95, 175, 219, 254,
238, 31, 230, 31, 40, 240, 58, 92, 91, 237, 121, 201
```

type this listing into your 128k spectrum, RUN and watch. . . .

BETA NEWS

The second issue of the *Beta BASIC* newsletter has just reached me, and fascinating stuff it is too. After the mandatory apologies for last issue's typos (not that we can talk!) the newsletter discusses 'invisible' procedures, support for disk systems, ellipse drawing, Microdrive handling, and bug-fixes. It's all pretty candid, and good value for *Beta BASIC* users at £5.50 for six issues, direct from BETASOFT.

NEXT MONTH

With luck and a following wind I'll have another simple hardware project for you next month, plus more technical software news. In the meantime, please keep sending in your tips, comments and questions to me at TECH TIPS, CRASH TOWERS, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB

JUMPING JIGSAW PUZZLES!

Crash Competition

Adorn your walls with framed caricatures of the famous

T Shirts, Signed Posters and Pretty Piccies to be won!



DOMARK have come up with a wizard game. It's called *Split Personalities*, and has won them their first CRASH Smash (okay, the game started life as *Splitting Images*, but the rubber puppet pranksters weren't amused.) Full details on the game, reviewed under its original title, appear on page 18 of this issue.

Understandably, the chaps at Domark are far from cut up about their new game — which is more than can be said about the pictures of the famous people that you have to assemble in the fast and furious action. Ronnie's there, so's Maggie, Sir Clive, Alan Sugar, Neil Kinnock — in fact ten famous people have been lovingly caricatured by Dutch software house Erniesoft and included in the game. The only Face they missed was Lloyd Mangram's!

Can you put the pieces back together again? Here's a little test run, featuring the physog of a well know actor and chimpanzee's co-star. Shuffle the bits round until you get the picture, stick them down firmly on a piece of paper, complete the entry form remembering to add you shirt size, and post the whole caboodle to UN-SPLITTING PERSONALITIES, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB, making sure your reassembled masterpiece turns up in the Towers before 31st of July.

SPLIT PERSONALITIES ENTRY FORM

NAME ....

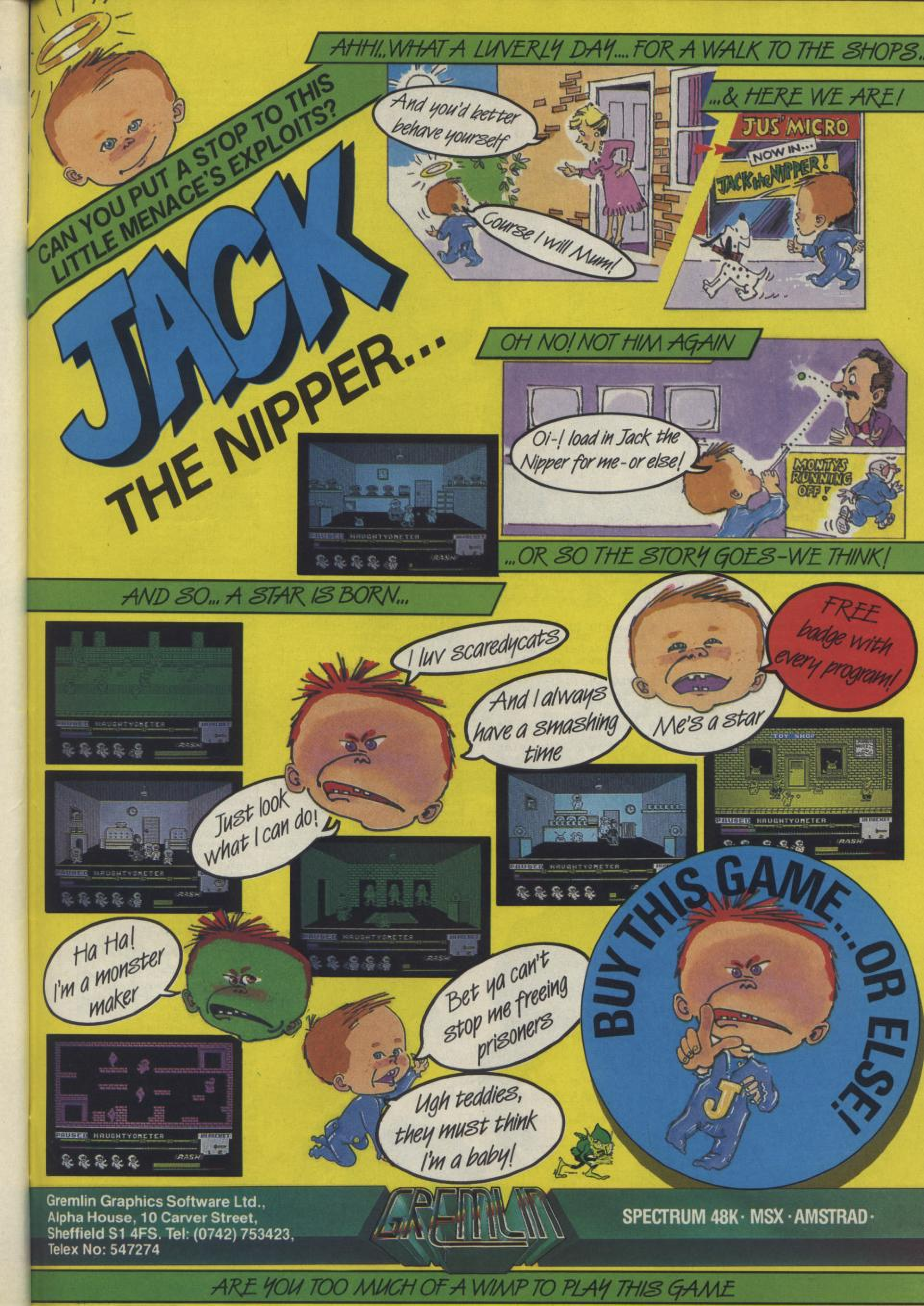
ADDRESS ....

....

.... **POST CODE** ....

SHIRT SIZE ....

First correct entry out of the bag collects a framed set of full-colour screen dumps taken from the game by the incredibly expensive equipment at DIMENSION GRAPHICS, while ten runners up are in line for a ''Domarked for Life'' T Shirt and a signed copy of the SPLIT PERSONALITIES poster. The next forty correct entrants win their very own signed poster.



CAN YOU PUT A STOP TO THIS LITTLE MENACE'S EXPLOITS?
JACK THE NIPPER...
AHH!..WHAT A LUVERLY DAY.... FOR A WALK TO THE SHOPS..
And you'd better behave yourself
Course I will Mum!
...& HERE WE ARE!
JUS' MICRO
NOW IN...
JACK the NIPPER!
OH NO! NOT HIM AGAIN
Oi-! load in Jack the Nipper for me - or else!
MONTYS RUNNING OFF!
...OR SO THE STORY GOES-WE THINK!
AND SO... A STAR IS BORN...
I luv scaredycats
And I always have a smashing time
Me's a star
FREE badge with every program!
Just look what I can do!
TOY SHOP
Ha Ha! I'm a monster maker
Bet ya can't stop me freeing prisoners
Ugh teddies, they must think I'm a baby!
BUY THIS GAME...OR ELSE!
Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423, Telex No: 547274
GREMLIN
SPECTRUM 48K · MSX · AMSTRAD ·
ARE YOU TOO MUCH OF A WIMP TO PLAY THIS GAME



Mikie Locker Room
Super Ted Completed
Yabba Dabba Doo Completed
Zipper Flipper 9,155
James Ward, Weston-Super-Mare

Atic Atac Completed
Mikie complete three times
Starquake Completed 81%
Bruce Lee Completed 27 times
Commando 190,164
Exploding Fist 5th Dan
Monty on the Run 990
Frank Bruno's Frenchie
Jason Wood Sheffield

Movie 51%
Underwurlde 31% Completed
Sir Fred 32%
Back to Skool Completed
Beach Head Completed
Bombjack 126,000
Rollercoaster 7,600
Way of the Exploding Fist Beaten 10th Dan
Finders Keepers 88% Completed
Hobbit Completed
Hampstead Completed
Planet of Death Completed
Shadow of the Unicorn 51%
Commando Area 6, 120,000
Samantha Fox Strip Poker all six pictures
Saboteur Completed levels 1-3
Pyjamarama 100% Completed
Frank Bruno's Boxing Reached Frenchie
Yie Ar Kung Fu Level 32
Skool Daze Completed
Match Day Won 11-1 in final
Zorro Completed — About 40,000
Fighting Warrior Completed
Bess Blake Inverness, Scotland

Commando Area 10, 276,450
Atic Atac 93%
Back to Skool Key to Head's Office
Rocky Completed (won world championship)
Starstrike 1,045,200
Skool Daze Released all shields, plus 3 letters
Yie Ar Kung Fu Completed once
Wild West Hero Eleventh Wave
Jamie Wilkinson Bradford

Hypersports 109,897; Swimming 26.19 seconds; Skeet Shooting 8,900; Long Horse 9.44; Archery 4,000; Triple Jump 15.98 metres; Weight Lifting 150 kg
Football Manager Won F.A. Cup in the Third Division, and the 'double' 3 times
Nodes of Yesod 29%
Yie Ar Kung Fu 15th stage
Way of the Exploding Fist 10th Dan twice
Daley Thompson's Decathlon Day 1, 189,693; Day 2, 519,686; 100 metres 8.98 seconds; Long Jump 8.41 metres; Shot Putt 26.01; High Jump 2.45 metres; 400 metres 34.80 seconds; 110 metres hurdles 9.35 seconds; Pole Vault 5.10 metres; Discus 75.90 metres; Javelin 123.21 metres; 1500 metres 373.81 seconds
Guy McIntyre, Yeovil

Commando 275,430
Exploding Fist 760,910 (10th Dan)
Spy Hunter 198,360 on novice
Rambo 76,790
Starstrike II 1,794,310
Raid Over Moscow 134,320
David Rutledge, Enfield

Hypersports 116,865
Gyroscope 7,310
Back to Skool Completed
Fairlight Completed
Chukie Egg 1,768,480
Exploding Fist 375,690
Keith Rutledge, Enfield

Lazy Jones 11,130
Ant Attack 3 rescued
ID 73%
Deathchase Level 4 (completed)
Manic Miner Up to level 12
Fred 3rd Pyramid
'Lemon Otter', Dorchester

Alien 8 23 Chambers
Dragontorc Completed
Shadowfire Completed
World Series Baseball Beat computer on all levels
Bruce Lee Killed wizard 12 times
Nodes of Yesod Completed
Arc of Yesod Completed
Dynamite Dan Completed
Marsport Completed
Cosmic Wartoad Completed
Gunfright 4th Bandit
V Set fire bombs
Green Beret Got to the harbour
Ian Hillier, Chandlers Ford

Gunfright Second bandit Killed
Jetpac Completed 4 times
Atic Atac Completed
Nodes of Yesod 83%
Minder £4,210
Knight Lore 65%
Exploding Fist 9th Dan
Spy Hunter 112,300
Hypersports 115,000
Spellbound 56%
Mark Goodwin, Hall Green, Birmingham

Back to Skool Completed, 350 lines
Commando Stage 4
Mikie Completed once
Spellbound 42%
Saboteur 6,800, completed 1 & 2
Bruce Lee Killed wizard 14 times
Fairlight Completed
Action Biker Completed
Alien 8 levels 1-8
Southern Belle Overall 87%
SuperGran Fed-up until second go!! Beat that.
Peter Donnelly, Chipping Sodbury,

Elite Deadly, 200,000 approx
Dun Darach Completed
Atic Atac Completed
Trans Am 22 cups
Exploding Fist 7th Dan
Fantastic Voyage 7 parts collected, 67,100 (78%)
Football Manager FA cup twice, 1st division championship in only five seasons
Manic Miner 17th level
Lords of Midnight Completed
Doomdark's Revenge Completed
Cookie Baked cake twice
Stuart Paul, Norwich

Monty On The Run Completed with 4,900
Swords and Sorcery Collected 2 sabatons, magic sword and magic staff
Knight Lore 2 charms
Alien 8 3 rooms
Football Manager Won F.A. cup
Pyjamarama Completed with 96%
Kokotoni Wilf 4th time level
Bored of the Rings Finished 1st game and stuck at maze (help!)
Manic Miner 7th level
Spy vs Spy Quite a sly spy
Jonathan (what's a POKE?) Hazelwood, Morpeth

Three Weeks In Paradise Completed
Gunfright Clever Jake
The Biz No 1 with 'Si's song'
Skool Daze Completed
Back to Skool Completed
Highway Encounter Completed
Starquake Completed 68%
Commando Area 7
Bombjack 636,210
Gyroscope Completed
Pyjamarama Completed 98%
Everyone's a Wally Completed
Herbert's Dummy Run Completed
Full Throttle First on all tracks
Frank Bruno's Boxing Completed
Ballblazer Beaten level 5
Green Beret Very last part of the Prison Camp, 117,500
Simon Miles, Yeovil

Three Weeks In Paradise Completed 100%
Mikie Round the whole game 4 times
Bruce Lee Completed 5 times in a row
Saboteur Completed levels 1 & 2
Ping Pong 21,850
Sweevo's World 48%
Commando Killed on 4th stage
Frankie 26%
Bombjack 150,760
Match Day Beat all levels
Highway Encounter Killed on Zone 1
Exploding Fist 5th Dan
Pyjamarama 28%
Beach Head Completed
World Series Basketball Beaten by level 4
Way of the Tiger Beaten by troll on pole fighting
Eric Wickham, Headley Down



NEAOW DAKKA DAKKA BOOM (II)




Captain Sumpter in Biggles Mode.

You've read the books; you've seen the film — now you can play the game, wear the shirt, listen to the album. All courtesy of MIRRORSOFT.

There's no doubt about it, **Biggles** is a special kind of hero. He's not the daft sort of superhero who wears his underpants outside his trousers — he's a much more level-headed chap. In *Biggles*, the film, Captain WE Johns' heroic World War I airman meets up with his time-twin from the present day and gets involved in a caper which could prevent the course of history from being dramatically altered. In the game, you get to play through some of the key sequences from the film.

Biggles is everyone's hero — even our Database Minion, Garth Sumpter has a habit of dressing up in old flying jackets, donning an authentic handlebar moustache and muttering such words as "Wizard Prang Old Sport" and "Jolly Good Wheeze, What" in the general direction of anyone who will listen. He's even bought an authentic pilot's romper suit and wears it round the office! Strange lad, Gaz — the top of his head is perfectly flat (something to do with his Mum dropping him in horror when he was a baby: explains a lot, that . . .)

Now it's your chance to get on the Biggles bandwaggon. We've reviewed the game this issue and MIRRORSOFT have twenty five copies to give away, complete with a specially produced Biggles T Shirt. Top prize in this comp is a veritable sackful of Biggles memorabilia: the game and T Shirt (of course), a scarf, a badge, stickers, a signed photo of Neil Dickson who plays the central role in the film, and an album of the film soundtrack featuring half a dozen themes by Stanislas, tracks from John Anderson, Chakk, Deep Purple, Motley Crue and The Immortals.

To get you in the mood for a bit of derring-do, Oli has come up with a little sketch of Biggles in action. This, in case you hadn't already guessed, is a SPOT THE DIFFERENCE competition — but there's more than one difference between the two piccies reproduced here.

Ring round all the differences you spot on picture B, complete the entry form and send it to CRASH AIR ACE COMP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB, making sure you write your T Shirt size nice and clearly on the form. Closing date for entries is 31st July, so a move on. Chocks Away!





Take to the air with Flying Ace Biggles

Giant BIGGLES GOODIEBAG on offer

25 T Shirts and Games to be won

Crash Competition

BIGGLY, BIGGLY BIGGLY

I've spotted........differences

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POST CODE ....

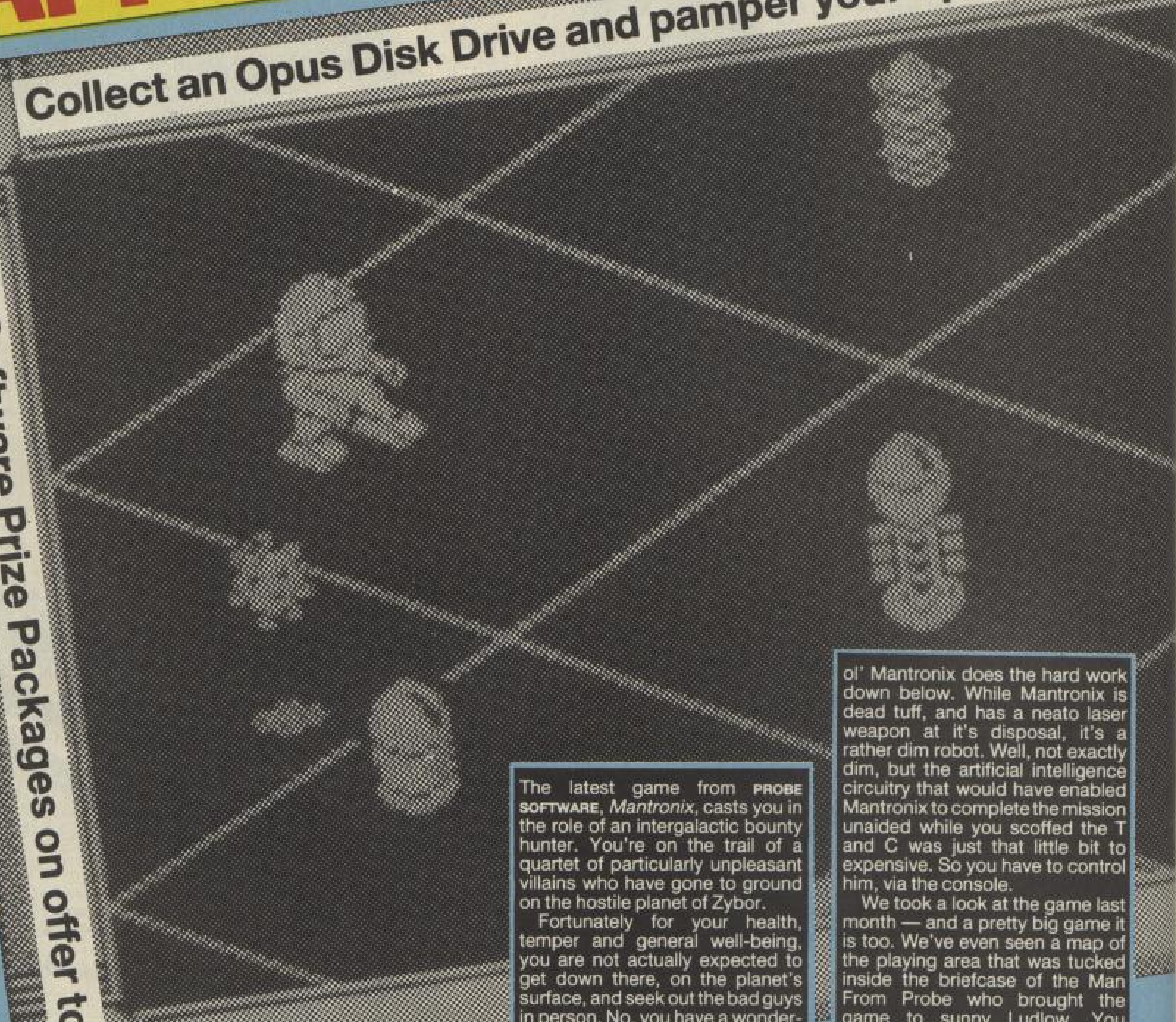
SHIRT SIZE ....

Crash Competition

MAPPING MANTRONIX

Collect an Opus Disk Drive and pamper your Spectrum

20 Probe Software Prize Packages on offer too!



The latest game from **PROBE SOFTWARE**, *Mantronix*, casts you in the role of an intergalactic bounty hunter. You're on the trail of a quartet of particularly unpleasant villains who have gone to ground on the hostile planet of Zybor.

Fortunately for your health, temper and general well-being, you are not actually expected to get down there, on the planet's surface, and seek out the bad guys in person. No, you have a wonderfully engineered robot at your disposal — a Mantronix — and it's up to you to guide the tin lawman to the lair of the four bad guys, do away with them and collect the bounty.

It's not quite a matter of sitting back in a comfy chair in your command module orbiting Zybor, eating crumpets laden with strawberry jam and drinking tea while ol' Mantronix does the hard work down below. While Mantronix is dead tuff, and has a neato laser weapon at it's disposal, it's a rather dim robot. Well, not exactly dim, but the artificial intelligence circuitry that would have enabled Mantronix to complete the mission unaided while you scoffed the T and C was just that little bit to expensive. So you have to control him, via the console.

We took a look at the game last month — and a pretty big game it is too. We've even seen a map of the playing area that was tucked inside the briefcase of the Man From Probe who brought the game to sunny Ludlow. You haven't, so when it comes to drawing a map of *Mantronix* you're on your own. Mind you, there's an Opus Disk Drive on offer for the prettiest map received in CRASH Towers by 20th August. And Twenty goodiebags containing posters and a specially commissioned T Shirt for runners up — so get mapping. Entries please to MANTRONIX MAP, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB — and don't forget to add your Shirt size to the entry form which should be firmly fixed to your map.

MANTRONIX MAP

NAME ....

....

ADDRESS ....

.... POST CODE ....

SHIRT SIZE ....

GROWN AT HOME . . .

HANNAH SMITH took a look through the HOMEGROWN SOFTWARE file, and reports back on her personal favourite in the collection of games we've received so far.

I'm not really sure what our Doc Martened Editor has started off with this HOME GROWN SOFTWARE thing, but something monstrous is happening in the bottom drawer of the old faithful filing cabinet. Do-It-Yourself games are sprouting up all over the place in there. Only last week I had a little peek inside and there were just a couple of cassettes nestling comfortably in a file. Now the drawer is practically bursting at the seams with software.
A lot of the games we have received are adventures, written with *The Quill* and associated utilities. These will be passed on to Derek Brewster in due course. Last issue there was a sneak preview of *Supernova*, written by fifteen year-old Anthony Bailey and, as promised, here is a full review of the game which has stirred more than a little interest here in the CRASH office.

SUPERNOVA

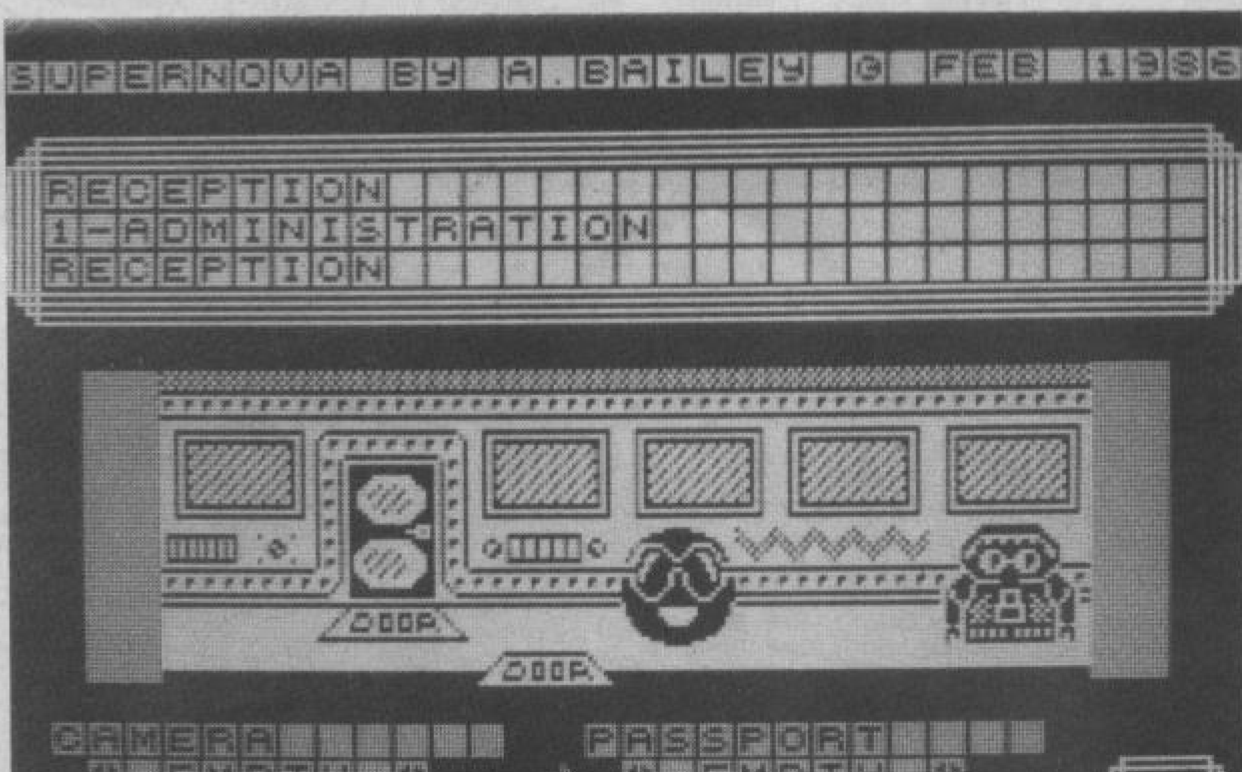
Even in the world of automation, intelligent machines need to get away fromit all. The slightly better-off automatons choose to spend their annual holidays at the prestigious Supernova Hotel on the planet Antares, relaxing in all the finery and splendour to which they have become accustomed. For the rest of us it'll be two weeks in Weston-super-Mare if we're lucky.
The star of *Supernova* is a spherical being with a cheesy grin and rather ostentatious sun glasses. It's a Really Odd Bio-Organism Thingy (ROBOT for short). He has delusions of financial grandeur — despite the fact that the cost of a holiday at the Supernova is way above his income, he decides to go along anyway.

He is an eternal optimist, and he finds the prices are even higher than he expected — by the end of his stay ROBOT has virtually nothing but a sun-tan to his name. The hotel staff are getting rather nervous and decide that he cannot leave until he has paid the bill. Although the hotel is a paradise in space, ROBOT is getting a bit homesick, so you must help him raise the cash so can he settle up and go home.
The adventure is played over seven floors. The game begins in Administration and you move around the hotel by way of doors and lifts. Doors give access to other corridors and rooms within the hotel. They may be locked, however, and some objects that your ROBOT can collect along the way are of use as 'keys'. Certain lifts only go up, while others only go down, making the task of getting to a desired level rather frustrating at times. But that's all part of the game.
At the bottom of the screen the inventory displays the objects ROBOT has in his possession. There are some empty spaces in his ample pockets and by using the cursor he can transfer objects into lockers along the way or swap what he's currently carrying for the contents of a locker in the hope that it will be of value. The ROBOT can also buy things from the staff at the Supernova with the bit of money he has left. The fire button does everything else for you, depending on which object ROBOT is standing next to when you press it. For instance, if ROBOT is standing next to a Staff Droid and fire is pressed, a message from the droid appears on the top of the screen. Staff Droids along the way can give you hints and tips.
The facilities at the Supernova are seemingly never ending. There's everything the fashionable Droid needs to while away his holiday in comfort. From photographic dark rooms to chain stores, it's all at the Supernova. The ROBOT is not above a little gambling to try to earn a few pennies, and there's an arcade room for him to try his luck in. Fellow tourists at the Supernova are a fairly unscrupulous lot and can be bribed. Offer an object to a tourist and if he wants it you may gain something as well.
The graphics in the game are simple but effective. Each floor of the hotel is a different colour. At the top of the screen a table gives information on the current location, and messages from other guests and staff appear here too.
In his accompanying letter, Anthony apologises for the fact that most of the game is written in BASIC. Not that this makes much difference, because *Supernova* isn't a fast reflex arcade game but an arcade adventure inspired by the devilish puzzles devised by **Gargoyle Games**. For £1.99 it's certainly a good deal.
Supernova went down pretty well in the office and I was queueing up to get at my Spectrum for quite a few days when the game first arrived. Anyway, here's what **Dominic Handy**, a regular commentator on CRASH games, thought of it:

Supernova *is one of my favourite games of the moment. I looked at it as if it was sent in by a software company: the presentation is first class and the graphics are superb. I really loved the little character that you control, and the way he kept stopping and looking around at me was very cute. The sound in the game is adequate with a very good tune and colour is superbly used with every possible colour on the screen at once. There are no attribute problems because the scrolling play area is monochromatic, but the display is still very effective. My only gripe is that there should be an abort key, mainly because you can last a long time at one game and if someone else wants a go you have to break into the program. This is one mail-order game which there is no risk in buying. I'd give it high eighties all round in a full review . . .*

Supernova **is available only by mail order from Astral Software, 18 Woodstock Rd, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3DZ. Please enclose a stamped-addressed envelope along with your cash to make Anthony's life easier.**

That about wraps it up for this month's news on the Home Grown Software front. No doubt by next issue we'll need yet another filing cabinet in the CRASH office to accommodate all the DIY games we'll have received by then. Sigh.



In the Administration area, right at the start of the game. ROBOT smiles cheerfully from the centre of the screen while a Staff Droid shuffles on to the right



ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
NO! OUR HERO HIM THINK HIM FOUND A BIGANTIC CONKER BUT IT'S A MINE,... ER... NOT MINE AS IN 'NOT YOURS' BUT MINE AS IN 'KA-BOOOM'... AN' NOW HE'S LANDED ON A PLANET THAT IS HOST TO THE GALACTIC CONKER OLYMPICS! AND THE LOSERS GET TO BE DEAD A LOT!
WOH!
WHO NEX'?
JEEZ
DUFF
OO'S A PRETTY BOY, THEN?
PARROTMAN WINS.....
STAN' BACK! I'M FROM EARTH AN' I CHALLENGE YOUR BEST PLAYER TO A MATCH! YES I DO!
CHIRP!
OKAY, STAN, YOU'RE ON!
LOONY!
LOONY!
?
HARD CHEESE, SHORTY! TAKE A TIP FROM AN EXPERT, NEXT TIME, JUST WAIT UNTIL HE STARTS HIS SWING AN' THEN...
OWW
SHORTY S A LOSER...
?
YAY!
BAZZAZZ
...AND NOW, STANLEY EARTH, FROM A PLANET CALLED BACK, WILL RISK THE BAZZAZER BY TAKING ON THE BIG CHICKEN-LOOKING GUY... ...UM... PARROTMAN.. 'LEAST THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS HERE...
OHH...!
PARROTMAN'S A PRETTY BOY...
RIGHT, STANLEY, TROT ON OUT HERE AN' LET'S SEE THE COLOUR OF YOUR CONKER, BOY! (CHIRP) I GOIN' TROMP YOU GOOD WITH OL' MEGACONK HERE! YOU BET! I GOIN' GRAUNCH YOU EVEN!
SAY, WHERE YOU GET A FOOL NAME LIKE 'STANLEY'?
HEH! (CHIRP)
PRETTY BOY - PRETTY BOY
PITTA - PUT - POT - POOT
JUS' A FEW PRACTICE SWIPES TO WIND UP THE FANS, HOH! C'MON, BOY (CHIRP) TROT OUT YO CONKER...
STANLEY?..
BAZZAZER?..
ME...?
PARROTMAN'S A PRETTY BOY...
PRETTY-PRETTY BOY.
SKWAWK!
THAT'S NO CONKER...
EH?
THAT'S A MINE!!
WO HAPPEN?
WHO DAT SHAKING ME ABOUT?
A MINE!
IT'S A MINE!
IT'S A MINE!
IT'S A MINE!
THE HELL IT IS...
I'VE HAD IT FOR AGES!
URP!
IT'S A MINE!
IT'S A MINE!
MINE!
MINE!
CHIRP!
MINE!
A MINE!
WO AT THE REF?
SOMEONE TELL THIS ITALIAN TURKEY IT'S A-NO HIS, IT'S A-MINE!
OKAY... IT'S A-YOURS!!
AUH!
IT'S A MINE!
A MINE
IT'S A MINE!
ALL THIS WOBBLIN' IS MAKIN' ME FEEL A BIT UNCLE DICK..
OKAY! THAT SORTED THAT! NOW HOL' OUT YOUR CONKER, KIDDO! LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD...
CHIRP
AUH!
S A MINE
URP!
I THINK I GONNA...
HOY, REF! THAT STANLEY GOIN' BLOW THESE CHAMPIONSHIPS IF YOU DON'T DISQUALIFY IT!
REF.

GENESIS

THE BIRTH OF A GAME

Last month we launched the *GENESIS — Birth of a Game* competition in which the gauntlet was well and truly thrown down to CRASH readers. Can you design the ultimate computer game for DESIGN DESIGN to program and DOMARK to take to the marketplace?

Designing games doesn't seem to be too much of a problem for CRASH readers — we've had a small torrent of entries already, if not quite a flood.

We riffled through the entries received so far, and there are a lot of good ideas floating around and some excellent scenarios. Judging isn't going to be easy! If there's a game idea inside you that hasn't got onto paper yet, you've got until 31st of July to get your entry in, and remember — it could put you firmly on the path to fame and fortune!

Meanwhile, here's a quick look at a couple of the game ideas we've already received . . .

THE QUEST FOR THE CLOD

The Quest for the Clod is the unusual title of **Paul Bayfield**'s entry. Paul's a Lancastrian lad, and although his game design kicks off in deep space, it soon comes down to earth — literally.

Far away in another part of the Galaxy, a space ship cunningly disguised as a clod of earth hurtles towards the planet we all know and love (and live on.) This strange craft is packed with information from beyond the stars. The navigational systems on the spaceship suffer a malfunction, and instead of arriving at its intended landing place it plummets into an allotment somewhere in Lancashire.

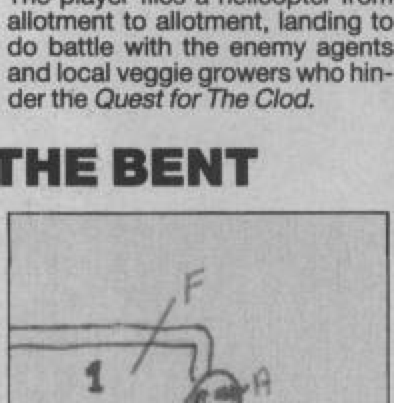
No-one is really sure of the space craft's exact location and scientists have been tracking its course through space, eager to lay their hands on the mass of information it contains. A desperate fight begins between the Superpowers and a certain magazine in Ludlow to see who can find the alien craft first. Will our heros Tilley Gibbons and Samantha Lewis manage to get hold of the secrets contained in the alien vehicle — or will Ivor Bolsovitch, a secret agent from the Kremlin and Balthazar Wartburger, pick of the crop from the FBI, beat them to it?



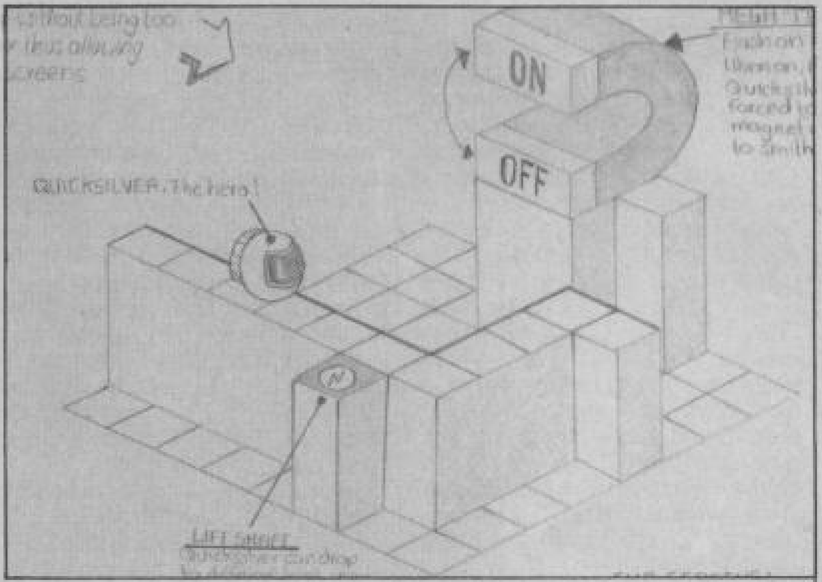
Paul's game design sets Samantha and Tilley romping through the allotments, dodging the odd low flying black pudding and irate gardner in their search for the Clod From Outer Space. The two characters you control have different strengths and weaknesses and the game is part arcade adventure, part strategy. The player flies a helicopter from allotment to allotment, landing to do battle with the enemy agents and local veggie growers who hinder the *Quest for The Clod.*

MR MISER AND THE BENT BEAN CAN

Ian Fitch from Suffolk has come up with a delightfully simple scenario for his arcade adventure with cartoon style graphics: measly miser Alfred McNasty buys a can of beans from a shop and then discovers that there is a large dent in the can. Incensed, Alfred goes back to get a refund but . . . the shop, being a Mobile Shop, has left the area. Alfred's such a mean miser, he will go to any lengths to find the roving store, so long as doesn't have to spend any money! The game involves fare-dodging on the buses and trains and lots of hoofing it around the city centre. Alfred encounters a variety of characters who can help or hinder him in the quest to return the beans and obtain a refund — housewives, Punks, children and shopkeepers all appear in the game. In Alfred's case Beanz Meanz very sore feet.



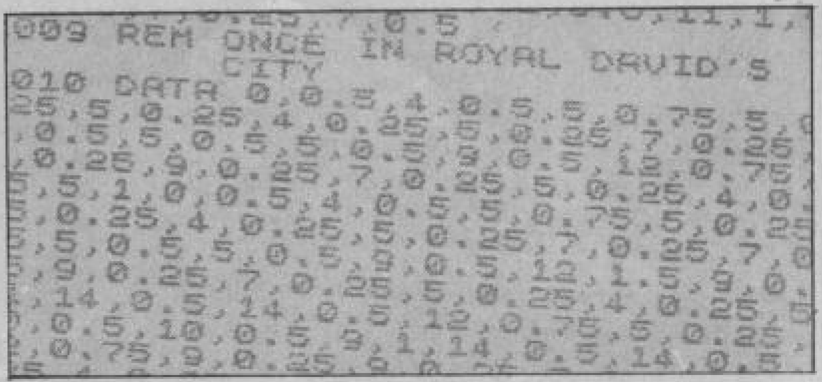
QUICKSILVER



Poor little robot Quicksilver has been botnapped from his home planet of Mercurion by the evil Dread Droids who aim to have some fun at his expense. Quicksilver finds himself inside the maze-planet Torturax and the nasty Dreads are about to do unpleasant things to him.

Suddenly, Quicksilver receives a mystery message which tells him that escape from the maze is possible if he can only find five terminal points and interface with them. The game takes the form of a flip-screen arcade adventure along the lines of *Bobby Bearing* and *Spindizzy*, although there are quite a few twists and turns to the gameplay . . . including rampaging nasties. cosmic catapults, mega magnets and giant pipes. Lifts link the levels of Torturax, and mapping the game will be an essential prerequisite (LMLWD) of play. **Lee Smith** of Herts has certainly put *Quicksilver* in an awkward predicament . . .

CAROLINE's CAROL LINES



Although it's trying to be summer here in Ludlow, this entry from **Jonathan Brough** of Seaton in Devon has a distinctly wintry flavour to it. The game stars a female vicar (a vicar-ess?) who suddenly gets a mental block when it comes to remembering Christmas carols for her festive church service. As her organist and churchwardens are all in bed with the flu, her only hope to is to track down members of her family, who, on receiving correct answers to Biblical questions will refresh Caroline's memory when it comes to the Christmas carols.

Jonathan's games design involves four sub-games, each of which requires a different style of play. Starting in the town, Caroline the Carol-less vicar has to employ tactics to secure the first parts of her missing tunes, visiting locations in the correct order. An arcade sequence follows at the seaside, where the player has to rely on timing and reactions to coax Caroline's brothers into revealing a few more tuneful morsels. The game then moves on to a maze sequence in the inner city and finally concludes with an adventure in a television station.

Well, that's just a sprinkling of some of the more unusual game ideas we've received so far. Don't forget that the scenarios on this page remain the copyright of the authors — so no pinching them! Keep the entries coming in, but remember — time's running out.

MERELY MANGRAMMERELY M

The boom in budget software brought a flurry of low-price games into the offices just as the finishing touches were being put to this issue of the magazine. Casting aside the strong temptation to put in some overtime on my herbacious borders where the lupins and delphiniums are just coming into their full glory, I set to work. . . .

The first collection of budget games arrived from PLAYERS just after the reviews had been written. Selling for £1.99, the range kicks off with a respectable selection: *Cagara*, an arcade adventure full of mazes in which you have to recover a magic chalice, aided and abetted by a sulky hamster by the name of Eric who has helicopter blades sprouting out of his back; *Desert Hawk*, a *Choplifter* variant in which you sit the the cockpit of a helicopter and fly rescue missions behind enemy lines; *Claws of Despair*, an adventure game with graphics which Derek will be taking a close look at in due course, along with the wacky and zany *Journey to the Centre of Eddie Smith's Head*.

The budget business is booming for ATLANTIS as well — they've just released the follow up to *Mafia Contract*, wittily titled *Mafia Contract II*. Another one for Derek. Two cavern-searching games have also arrived from the ATLANTIS stable in the form of *Caverns of Kontonia* and *Luna Attack*, both arcade adventures with a space theme. £1.99 apiece, as usual.

Our hallowed Editor, whom I must approach soon with my annual plea for a pay rise, recently visited the lair of GREMLIN GRAPHICS in deepest Sheffield, returning with *Jack The Nipper* and news of the GREMLIN launch schedule. And very impressive it is too, with a flip screen arcade adventure, *Future Knight*, on the cards for an October launch. A cunning ballgame played on a chequered roadway which scrolls 'out' of the screen is also underway — 'a sort of cross between *Bounder* and *Ballblazer* according to Dash Ed, who came away well impressed. *Way of the Tiger II*, where the action should be viewed from above and a football simulation in which you try to become *Footballer of the Year* are due from the Sheffield Byte merchants' HQ between now and Christmas.

Melbourne House are beavering away on *Fist II*, which, we are told, is to feature the same type of control and range of movements as the original, as well as a number of enhancements. Rather than fight formal matches for points, the combatants have to fight through different locations each of which have an effect on combat and



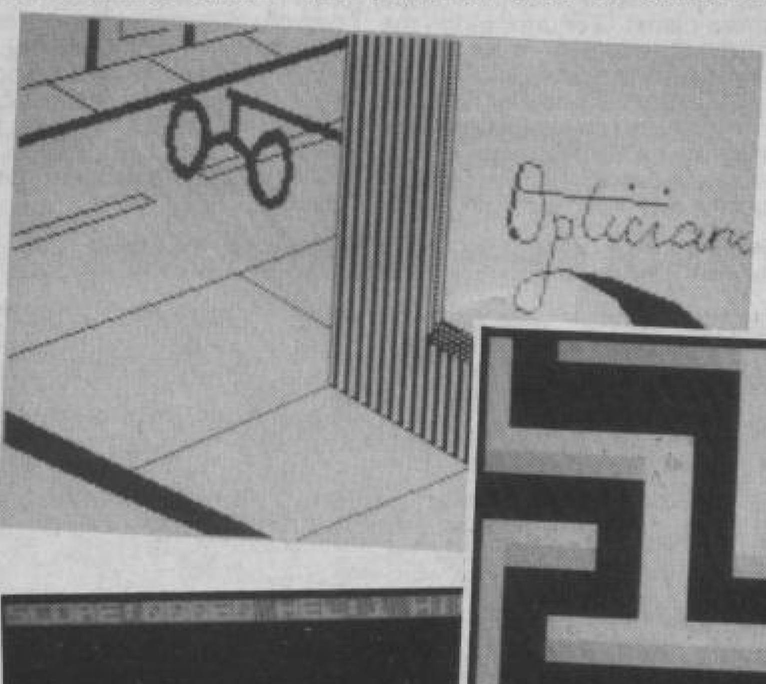


stamina levels. Stamina is reduced very rapidly when a fall is taken in a swamp for instance. Drowning isn't good for you! A cave plays host to one scrapping session, and with the low ceilings the range of moves available is reduced.

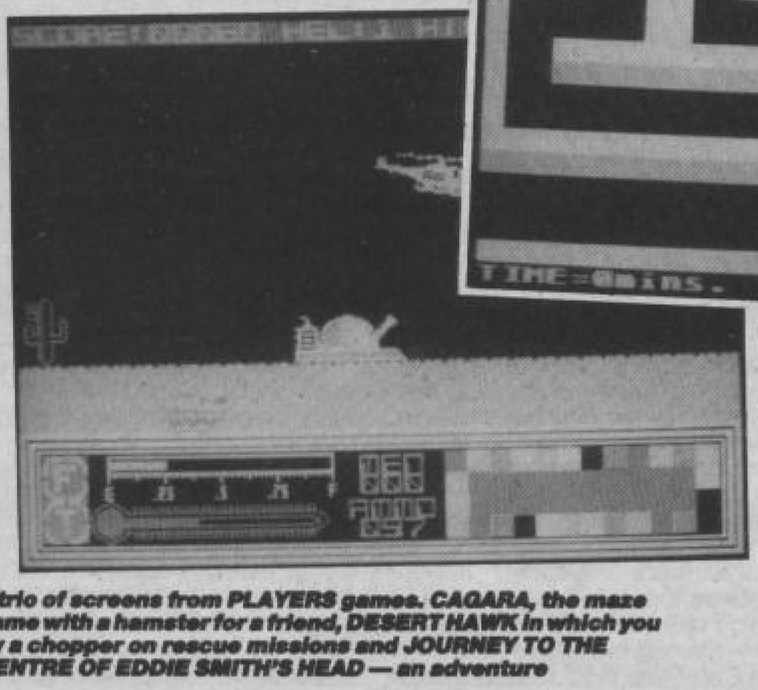
Costa Panayi is currently working on a new project for VORTEX, and is trying to create a randomly generated 3D game in time for a late July release. Apparently, you start at the bottom of a stack and have to work up towards the top by setting four switches on each successive level and scampering to a lift before it leaves for the floor above. Sounds intruiging — more details next month, VORTEX willing.



In the same part of the world, SOFTWARE PROJECTS are working on a new multi-load game. They're keeping very quiet about it, but if we send our Doc Martened Editor in the general direction of Manchester we should be able to frighten them into revealing more in time for the next issue!







A trio of screens from PLAYERS games. CAGARA, the maze game with a hamster for a friend, DESERT HAWK in which you fly a chopper on rescue missions and JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF EDDIE SMITH'S HEAD — an adventure

BUBBLE BUS are just waiting for **Tom Prosser** to put the final touches to *The Ice Temple* which we look at more closely over the page. They have a new game from **John Caine** scheduled for release in September — remember John? Well you should remember *Booty*. . . .

Moonlight Madness is the title of John's new opus.

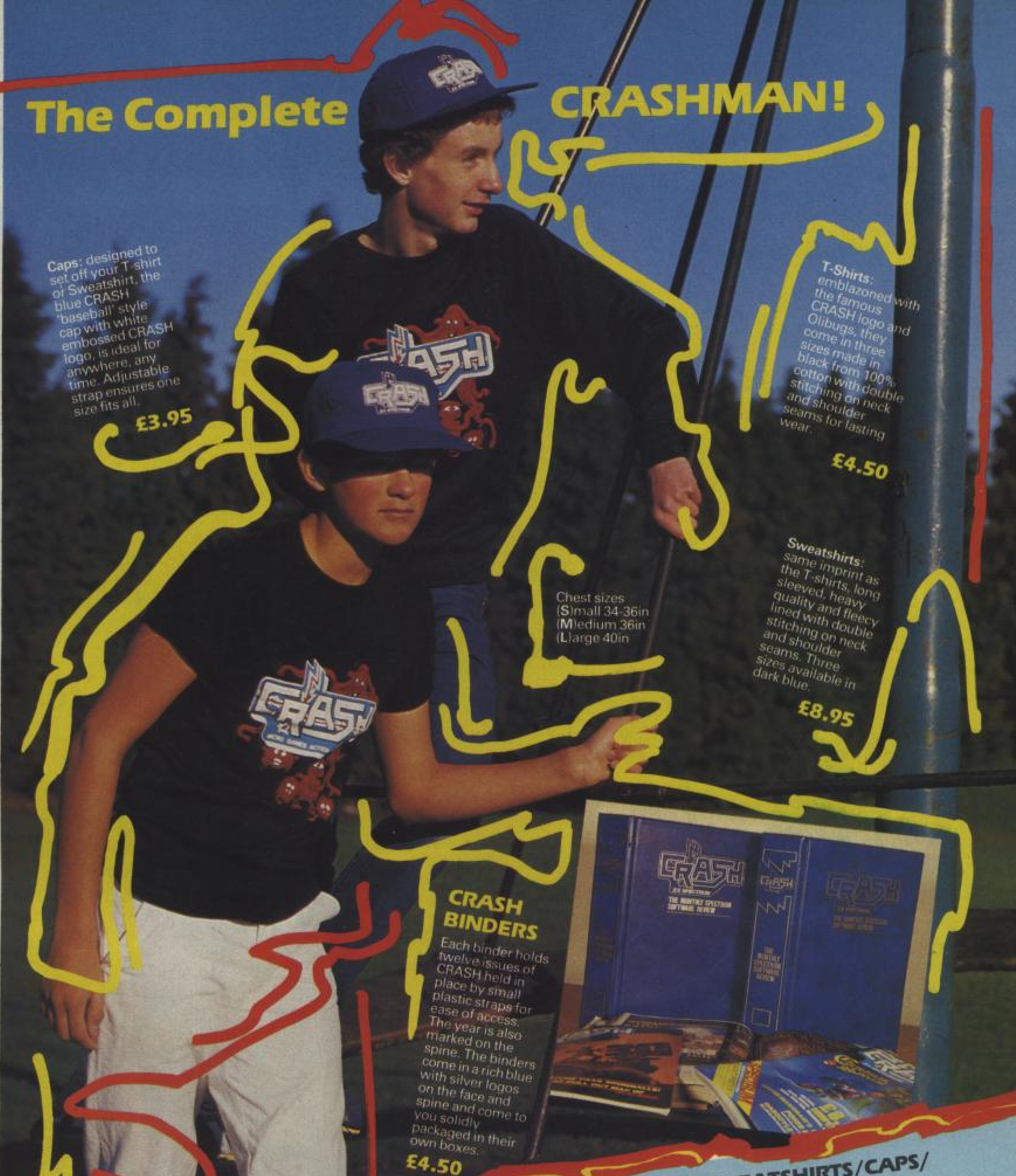
A couple of humour-packed adventures are on their way from CRL who don't seem too upset now they've had to abandon the Dreamsellers project. *The Boggit*, (a wittier title than *Bored of the Rings II*) is virtually complete and continues the saga of the slightly mad Tolkeinesque creatures created by **Fergus** from DELTA 4. The gels at St BRIDE's have now completed their *Very Big Cave Adventure* for the ever-youthful **Clem Chambers**, CRL supremo, while an arcade game by the name of *Captain Slog* is due any day now from the budget label founded by Clem called ALPHA-OMEGA. Poor ol' Captain S is trapped in space and needs to find a set of blueprints that give him access a teleporter so he can return to earth. A limited oxygen supply and hungry monsters make the task that bit more tricky.

Another Manchester firm, this time OCEAN is keeping a gently low profile — *Knight Rider* and *Street Hawk* are still around a corner in the future, as is *Hunchback II — The Adventure*. In *Hunchy II* the aim of the game is: set out from Chez Quasi; make your way through the sewer system; pick up useful items from shops and finally get the key to the Cardinal's tower where Esmerelda is held prisoner. Featuring *Never Ending Story* type graphics and *Frankie* style on-screen messages the game

110

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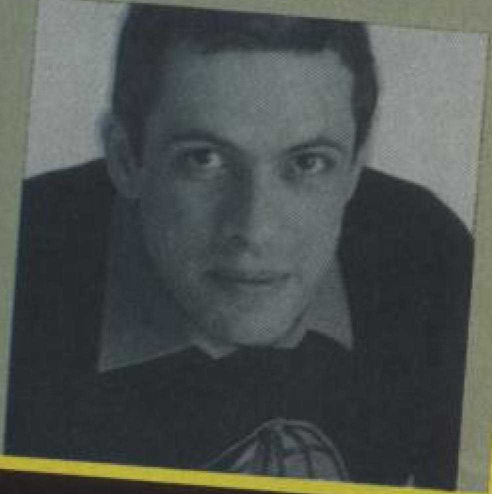


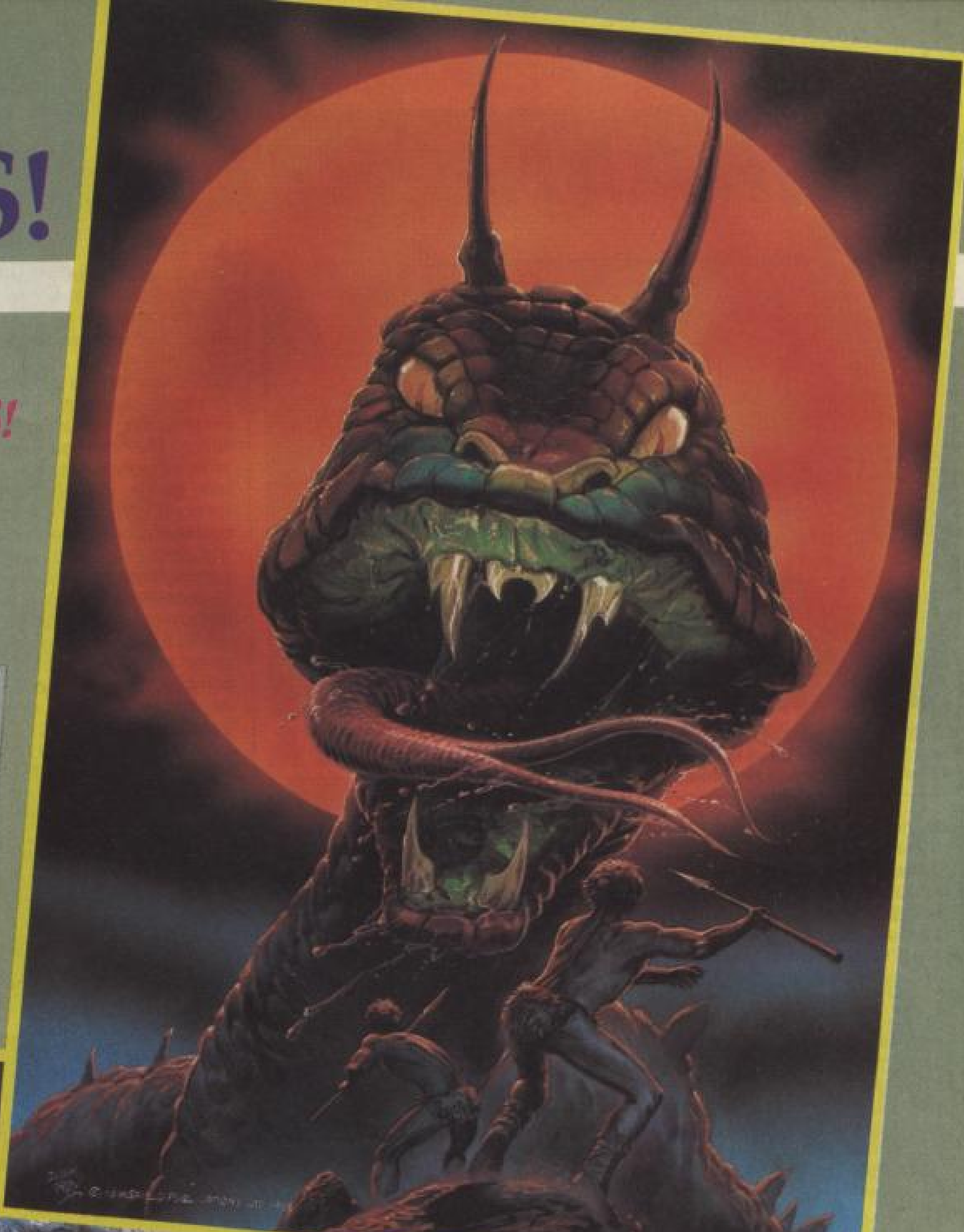
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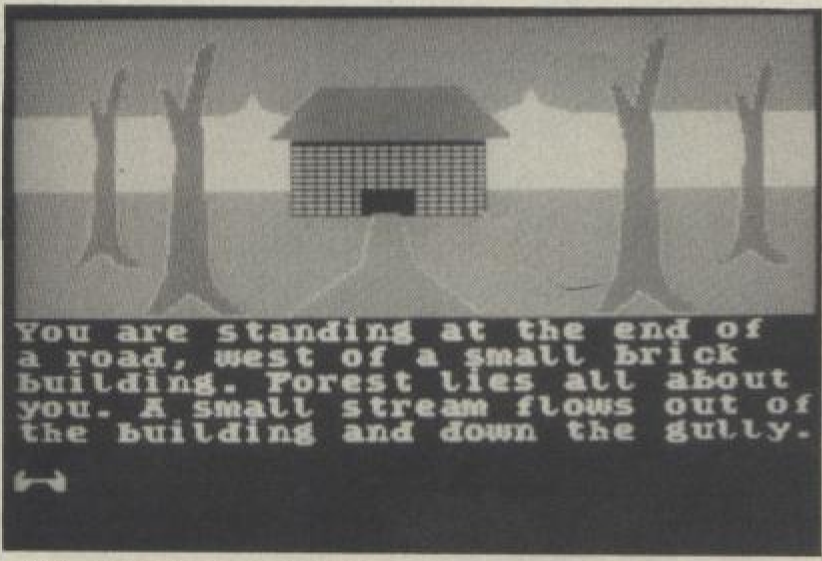
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THE VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE — a spoof adventure from the St BRIDE'S team that looks like it involves quite a bit of lateral thinking and punny problems

sounds fun.

Some brand new BUG BYTE T Shirts have just been produced to a design by **Mark Taylor**, and on the games front *Rupert and the Ice Castle* should be in the shops by



now, followed by a re-release of the ever popular *Souls of Darkon*.

ARTIC are pleased to have started their own budget label — ANTARTIC — a review of *The Master* ought to appear earlier in this issue. A new £2.99 simulation from the parent company popped onto my desk this morning, a simulation which hints that rugby is 'for men only' but it seems this game can be played by girlies too . . .

GARGOYLE GAMES are going strong: the Carter/Follis/Heathcote trio have just completed an arcade game to go with ELITE's *Scooby Doo* licence and are working on a set of arcade games for an autumn launch under the FTL — Faster Than Light label. Priced around the £7.95 mark, the new GARGOYLE label promises thrills and spills galore, with the first game set to include *Heavy on the Magick* size figures in a fast space shoot em up! *Samurai Dawn* and a 'family entertainment' with the current working title of *George* are scheduled for Christmas.

An Autumn launch is booked for *Dan Dare* from VIRGIN — the result of over a year's work so far. *Atlantic Challenger* should be out a little sooner, to tie in with VIRGIN Supremo, **Richard Branson**'s second record-breaking attempt at crossing the Atlantic. The game takes the form of a light-hearted simulation in which you play the role of Richard as he attempts to pilot his boat across the perilous seas and keep his business empire afloat at the same time.

Robert White of DURELL has a portfolio of seven games lined up for autumn, including *Saboteur II*, **Mike Richardson**'s new game which involves dragons, an aeroplane game, a 3D car game and a totally original game from a Danish software house that has a lot to do with atomic powerstations. Hopefully nothing to do with Chernobyl — cassettes that glow in the dark, like swamps, are bad for you!

More Konami arcade conversions are due from IMAGINE, thus completing the deal with the Japanese arcade company — 'sports simulations' is about all we could glean before going to press. HEWSONS should be bringing *City Slicker* into the shops from the team who brought *Technician Ted* and *Costa Capers* to life on the Spectrum, as well as **Steve Crow**'s next game, *Firelord* — a 500 screen arcade adventure due for completion around the end of September. **Andrew Hewson** feel quietly confident that a Spectrum version of **Andy Braybrook**'s C64 hit *Uridium* is possible. More news as and when . . .

There's no stopping ARIOLASOFT . . . *Archon II* is being written for the Spectrum, but coyly, no-one is prepared to say quite when it'll be finished — nor are they prepared to commit themselves to a release date for RAM JAM's *Three Days in Carpathia*. Perhaps they're all tied up?

In a few weeks time we should be receiving a review copy of *W.A.R* from MARTECH. A review next issue may be on the cards — the game sounds a lot of fun: you are attacking a massive mechanical world inhabited by aliens whose only joy in life is invading planets. Earth is next on their list, and they're heading your way. Strategy underpins the shoot em up sequences, and attacking the cylinders that make up the alien world/invasion force means avoiding mean and nasty defence Droidans as well as the sophisticated missile systems set up to deter attackers.

The adventure world is still looking very healthy — RAINBIRD's tie-in with LEVEL 9 is about to pay dividends in the form of *Jewels of Darkness*, the promised trilogy which sees the relaunch of *Colossal Adventure*, *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure* in a three cassette pack with accompanying novella. The three games have been extensively upgraded and now contain 200 graphic locations and a language parser than can cope with 1,000 words and accept multiple commands. Not bad value for £14.95

Finally, *Rebel Planet* has just been forwarded to Derek Brewster for his attention. ADVENTURE SOFT UK are behind this graphic adventure based on the Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone book — you are sent on a mission to thwart the evil Arcadians, another alien race in the queue to conquor Earth. Sometimes I wonder why I bother with my begonias . . .

STOP PRESS

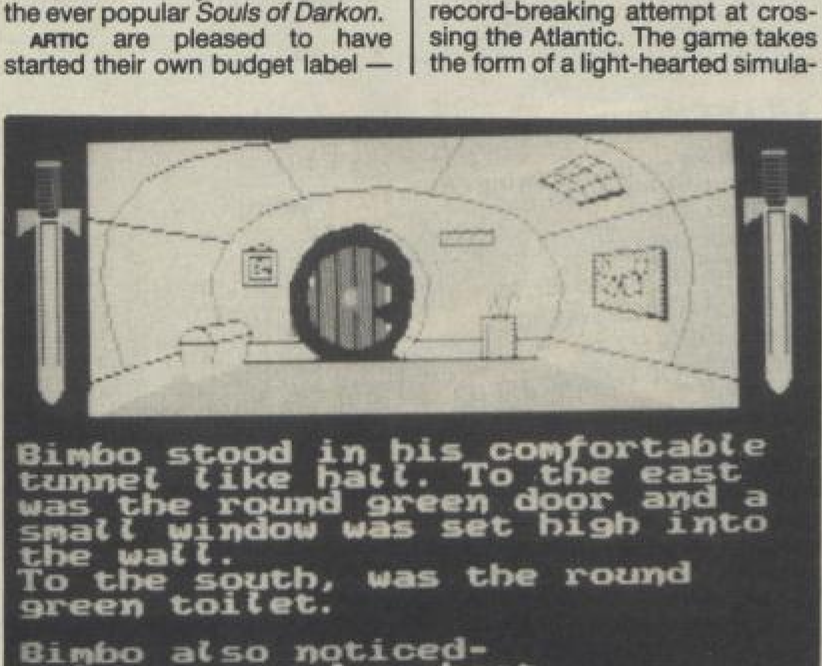
Just as I was about to potter home and take up my trowel, three rather interesting pieces of software landed on my desk. Overtime in the office rather than the garden results . . .

Hijack from ELECTRIC DREAMS is described as "one third arcade, one third strategy and one third simulation". The game is played from the point of view of the American Government's Head of the Security Service's Hijack Division and the scenario is set as a band of terrorists hijack a vehicle. Using a neat window/menu technique you have to liaise with your staff, the President and advisors and attempt to end the standoff. The terrorists can be forced into submission by military might, bought off with a suitcase full of dollars or persuaded to give in. But organising things takes time . . . Once the game starts, you are on your own.

ODIN recently delivered the final version of *Kimera* to FIREBIRD, who are now doing the marketing for them — and the game has undergone a name change. *Heartland*, as it is now to be known, should be reviewed fully next month, but the scenario arrived with the cut-down demo version of the game circulated to magazines. You are transported to a world within a book while asleep and dreaming; a book which contains the people, and indeed the whole physical form of the Nether World concealed within another dimension. Your task is to thwart the minions of the evil Demon Midas, collect up the six missing pages of the book scattered around the playing area and restore peace and joy to the stricken people of the Nether World. A variety of weapons are available to you, and you must travel across the many lands contained in the book. The graphics are certainly beautiful, although comments on the gameplay will have to wait until we have a working version.

Finally, a French software house is ready to take the UK adventure games playing world by storm with *Mandragore* — a vast adventure set in a mythical land which you explore in control of a team of four adventurers. Input to the game is achieved via a cunning keyword entry and command system, and the scope of the game is quite immense. At present, the programmers are tidying up a few graphics problems but the completed version should be available for your Spectrum in the very near future.

A little sweet talking to the Art Department in the attic of CRASH Towers meant that I could find a colour slot over the page for one — "and only one," they said — screenshot from each game.



Another adventure with a light-hearted scenario: THE BOGGIT, follow up to BORED OF THE RINGS

PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!

MEDALLION GAC ADVENTURE

IN THE ICE TEMPLE

BUBBLE BUS have a new Spectrum release in the pipeline — this time a game from **Tom Prosser**, who is putting the finishing touches to a massive arcade adventure containing eight hundred locations.

Intergalactic Dustman Nick Razor has been working all the overtime he can get for the past few years. You see, Nick's a custom cruiser freak — he spends every spare moment flicking through the holopages of the latest issue of Custom Craft, the magazine for streetwise spacemachine owners. After many years hard saving, Nick finally managed to amass enough credits for a heavily customised Space Cruiser. It's a real mean machine, featuring laser cannon, turbo drive, twin overhead toolkits — the lot.

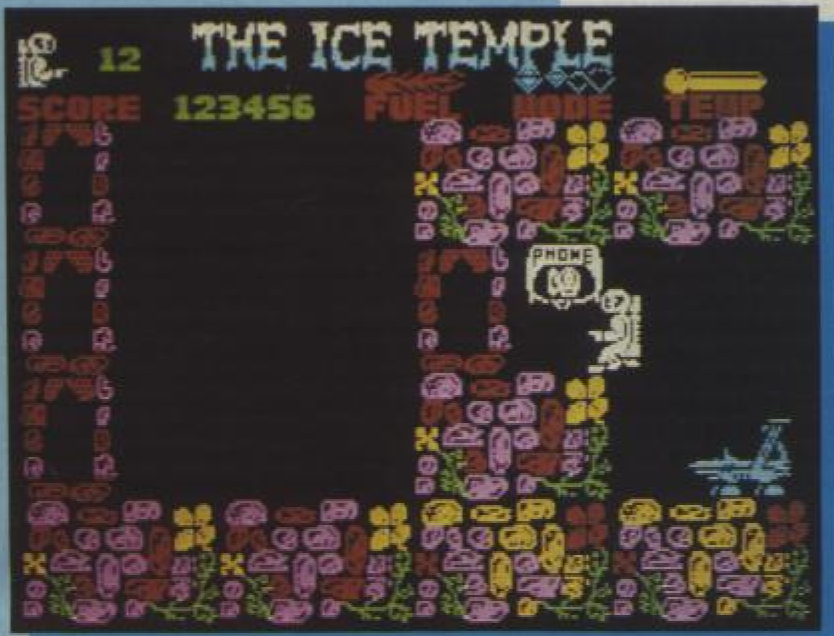
Nick is a proud dustperson indeed, lovingly shining his latest acquisition every weekend until one day he goes to the garage and finds the love of his life has been pinched. Joy riders have made away with his classy motor!

Nick sets off on the search for his pride and joy, finally discovering it, abandoned in an Ice Temple. After crying a few tears of glee, Nick looks around and realises that the Ice Temple is in fact a thermionic reactor, cunningly disguised as an Ice Temple. Evil Aliens are drawing power from the reactor and plan to invade earth and the offices of Custom Craft. Nick can't have that, so he sets out to disable the reactor.

Eight bits of machinery have to be discovered and taken to the appropriate place for destruction — but the game's not that straightforward. You see, each time the game is loaded, the eight destructors and the eight reactor components start off in a different location. So does Nick! If you die during a session, it's possible to resume the game with the same setup, or change the locations of the vital parts.

Nick is equipped with a handy jet pack to zoom around in, and has a flamethrower by way of a weapon when he's in jetpack mode — very handy for melting walls of ice and moving to new locations. Obviously, Nick has to find his customised cruiser in the Ice Temple before he can use it, but once aboard he can take advantage of its powerful laser cannon.

Tom's currently slaving away over a red hot Spectrum keyboard, and hopes to complete the game in time for a full review of *Ice Temple* next month. Look out for it . . .



Nick hops out of his Custom Cruiser to make a phone call in the Ice Temple. But that's no ordinary telephone, that's a teleport!



Inside the locked castle — you have to find a key, but to get to the key a poisonous snake has to be fed with a rat . . .

A NEW WAY TO CREATE ADVENTURES

A team of people down at INCENTIVE have been beavering away for yonks, working on a brand new adventure writing utility which goes by the name of *Graphic Adventure Creator* — *GAC* for short.

Sean Ellis is the main man behind the code, which was written on an Amstrad. The Amstrad *GAC* appeared a little while ago, before Alan Sugar bought the Spectrum, but by the time you read this the full-blown Spectrum implementation should be in the shops.

We've had a close look at the system — Ian Andrew popped up with a 90% finished version a little while ago, and just before this issue went to press the completed program arrived, together with a mini-adventure which shows the sort of thing that can be achieved with *GAC* without too much pain.

GAC is more of an 'Adventure Processor' than a hard-bitten, complicated utility. Setting up an adventure and modifying it with *GAC* is simplicity itself — the whole program is very user friendly indeed and very little in the way of braincell bashing is required before you begin to see the fruits of your labours. All the thinking can go into designing the adventure, rather than implementing it.

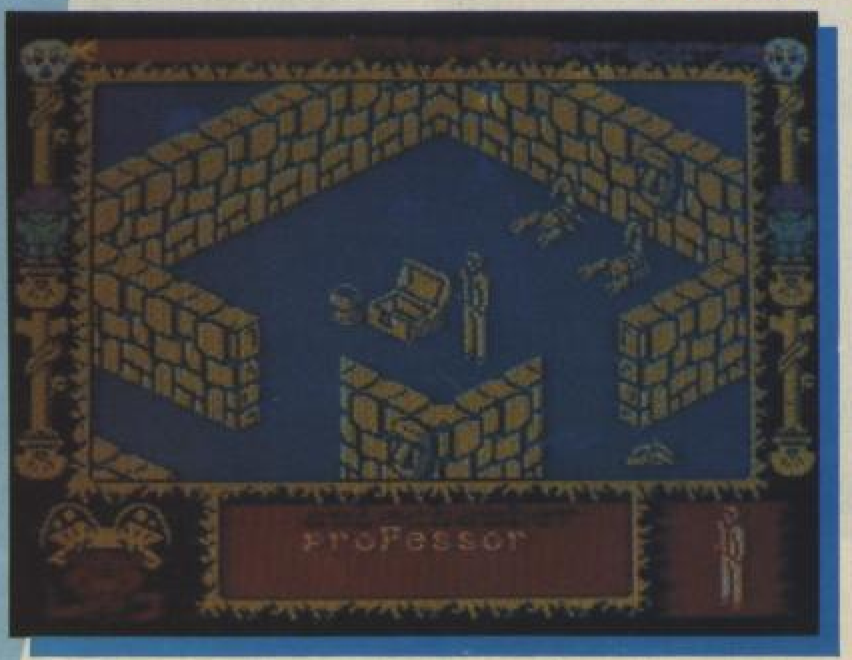
The package is completely self contained — graphics can be designed using the on-board drawing utility. A full review of the package will appear in the August Issue — but meanwhile feast your eyes on the graphics that accompany *Ransom*, the mini adventure that comes with the software; it's used to explain the way *GAC* can be used to create masterpieces.

INCENTIVE are quite happy for you to market adventures created with *GAC* — they don't want any loot, just an acknowledgement. And they might even publish your game for you if it's up to scratch: they plan to sell a range of adventures under the *Medallion Adventure* banner in due course.

PYRACURSE POPS INTO THE SHOPS . . .

Much gnashing of teeth and wailing in CRASH Towers this month was caused by a few days delay in the completion of HEWSON's latest arcade adventure, *Pyracurse*, previewed last month. Everyone has been having lots of fun stomping round the first level of the game, which Andrew Hewson brought into the office for us to play with complete with a copy of the original programmers' map etched onto battered graph paper.

Unfortunately, the finished version of the game arrived just a bit too late for us to do it full justice on the review pages this issue — so here's a little bit more to feast your eyes on. Keith Prosser and Mark Goodall have incorporated all the features they aimed for into the game, and the final product should keep gamesters enthralled for many hours. Next issue, Scout's Honour!



Mandragore



HIJACK

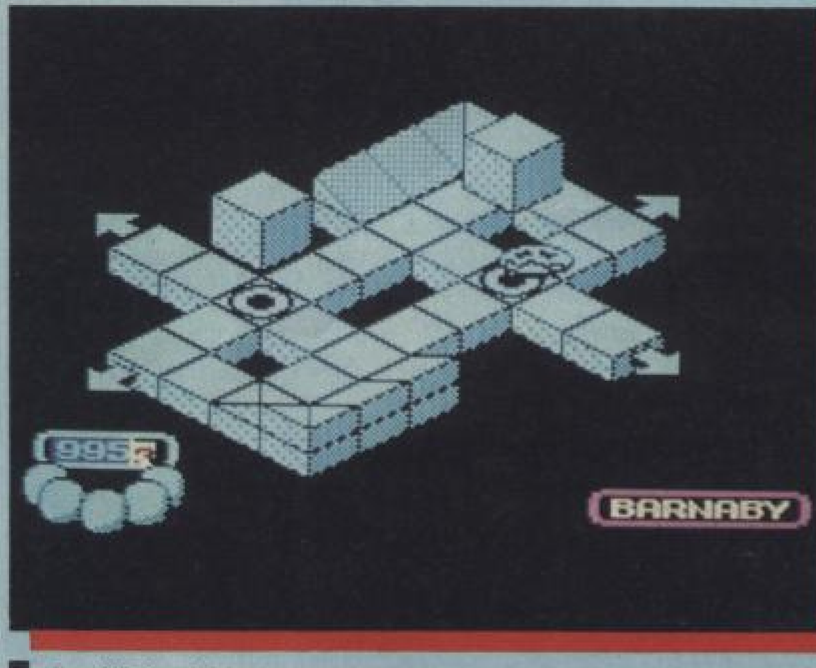


HEARTLAND



After much anxious waiting for the postman, THE EDGE'S next release arrived in the form of *Bobby Bearing*. Gary Liddon used his great bulk to fight to the front of the queue, and got the chance to preview the game.

MORE, MUCH MORE THAN MARBLE MADNESS



Poor old Bobby — he's just been squashed flat by the concrete block on the right. Rather like being sat on by Mr Liddon!

Little Bob is in a bit of a strop now his dimbo cousin has lead his four brothers astray. The rascally relative took the little Bearings into a strange land — the metaplanes that lie outside Chateau Bearing. Predictably enough they've stayed strayed. Now Bobby boy has to hunt them out and return them home before Mother and Father Bearing get back from the cinema to find Bobby and all his siblings out and about instead of tucked up in a nice bed of grease for the night. Even ball bearings have tender parts, and Bobby and his brothers could find their tender parts well and truly spanked. Poor old Bob, it's a lot of hassle being the oldest ball bearing in your family.

And it's no wonder that Bobby's parentals constantly warned all their children away from the evil places where they've now wandered, since the metaplanes are populated by a whole host of nasties just waiting for the odd unsuspecting bearing to wander their way.

Bobby has to retrieve his lost relatives from a one hundred and fifty screen playing area displayed in a *spindizzy*esque manner. His brothers have been badly biffed and are unconscious — so they won't wander about. This makes finding them a little bit easier, but when they have been found, getting back home again is well tricky, since it's up to Bob to push them. An awkward task, because Bob has to renegotiate all the obstacles he encountered on the way out, but this time with a groggy bearing in front of him.

The screens which form the playing area consist of rampways, dips and slopes and feature weird and wonderful magnets, curved runs, hidden pressure switches and moving blocks which have to be used as lifts and springboards during the journey. Air blasting holes are quite a surprise when you first trundle over them since they propel Bobby skyward and he balances on the airstream. With practice it's possible to take advantage of these blowers, using them as lifts.... When a block first hits you it's a downright shock: there are number of concrete slabs bouncing about in mid air, and they'll happily splat you into a pizza shaped blob of metal if you get under them at the wrong moment...

The game is played against the clock, and each time Bobby takes too long a fall or is biffed by a nasty he is stunned for a while and remains incapable of movement while a questionmark appears above his head. The gametime clock speeds up for a bit, too.

Bob's environment is very realistic indeed since the brothers Figgins who wrote the game have managed to get the Spectrum's Z80 to comprehend such awkward concepts as curved and sloped surfaces in a most convincing manner. It really is very clever indeed — I have seen nothing like it before. The monochrome graphics are very pretty indeed, mostly due to the great shading. The Figgins Bros. have really come up with something very promising. The copy that dropped into our sweating palms had only a fifth of the screens completed, and just one of Bob's relatives available for rescue (Bernard to be precise).

By the time this reaches your eyes Robert and Trevor Figgins should have the game completely finished and gracing your nearest stockist's shelves. At £7.95 it really does look like a bargain. We shall have to see . . . and you'll be able to see what we thought of the completed game next issue.

THE PUMPKIN STRIKES BACK!

Now that the Witch who starred in *Cauldron* has defeated the Pumpking and won control of the Golden Broomstick, she has seized his crown and his castle and lives there in splendour. The team at PALACE SOFTWARE couldn't really let this state of affairs last, so they sat down and wrote *Cauldron II*.

Flushed with success, the Witch has become lazy — she spends all day in bed — a real Sleeping Ugly. Little does she know, but one of the Pumpking's veggie minions survived her eviction: a tiny pumpkinlet approaches the castle with revenge on his mind and recovery of the Golden Broomstick as his aim.

The smiling little vegetable you control is capable of bouncing up and down, and has three strengths of bounce. The little chap bounces on the spot, rising progressively higher as the fire button is pressed, then leaping off to the left or right with an appropriate tweak of the joystick or prod of the direction key. Steps, ledges, tables, chairs and a host of architectural ornaments have to be negotiated on the journey round the chateau.

Each time a game starts, the little hero begins in one of eight randomly allocated start points. There are 128 locations to explore, most of them inside the castle and nearly all of them inhabited by very mobile and very dangerous creatures created by the Witch to defend her slumbering form. In order to dispose of the horrid hag the valiant pumpkin must cut off a lock of her hair and cast it into a cauldron in the basement of the castle together with a spell book that can be found somewhere in the building. This may sound straightforward, but five more vital objects have to be collected and used at the appropriate place if the game is to be completed.

Most of the nasties can be despatched with a blast of magic, shot out while the pumpkin is in the air by a press on the fire button — but some magic has to be on hand first. Sparkling pools of magic can be found and collected in some locations, and each shot costs 1% of the pumpkin's magic reserves. Nasties regenerate after a little while — killing them doesn't make the game permanently easier! Patrolling skeletons that guard some of the vital locations and objects can't be killed with a bolt of magic however, and the right object has to be in your possession before a skeleton can be tackled . . . Not all the nasties actually kill your little chum — some of them have a slightly different effect on his well being and position in life!

Palace have almost finished the programming — all is set for an end of July launch and they're just fine tuning the responses of the pumpkin and the nasties at the moment. Can you win the Castle back for the Veggie hordes?





The throne room in Castle Pumpkin. Can our little veggie chum depose the evil slumbering hag?

OLD FLATULENCE DECATHLON

Home Brew freaks will no doubt welcome the arrival of ALLIGATA's Pub Games — a computerised compendium of the games that are played in the very best sort of Local. Pour out a pint of home brew, load your Spectrum and hey presto, your home is transformed into the Tap Room of the Dog and Ferret.

Half a dozen games feature in the collection, including Dominoes, Skittles, Darts, Bar Billiards, Pontoon/Poker and Table Footie. ALLIGATA League rules apply: Darts is best of five games to 501 with a double to finish, while Skittles is played 31 up and throw three times from behind the line.

As we went to press, ALLIGATA were putting the final touches to the £9.95 package — all the separate games were up and running we were told, and just waiting to be slotted together. Seems they've been having a few problems with playtesting: the Press Release accompanying these snaps had a distinct aroma of hops and malt. It could be the lads have been nipping down the road regularly to make sure the computer versions of the games match up to the real thing!



With a nice full inventory and a pocket full of magic, the little pumpkin is about to take on one of the gargoyles on the Castle ramparts in CAULDRON II



On the Oche with ALLIGATA in their Darts simulation. Steve doesn't look like a proper darts player — where's his beer gut?

AROUND THE CORNER FROM THE EDGE . . .

Dr Tim Langdell, bossman of **THE EDGE** is in high spirits at the moment, and rightly so — he's got some very interesting software on the way. Not only is **Bobby Bearing** about to hit the streets (our resident foodaholic, Gary Liddon takes a close look at that one elsewhere on these pages), but a smart chess program featuring 3D graphics is well underway, as well as a new icon and menu-driven adventure — **Mindstone**.

Of course, on the serious software front **The Artist II** is around the corner (the final touches are being put to the printer driving routines) and **The Word** has just been finished — we'll be taking a close look at them in TECH NICHE as soon as we can.

And there's more fun software in the pipeline from The Edge, who are moving offices to gain extra programming space! **Fairlight II** is scheduled for an autumn launch, as is **Palatron**, a 3D game with a futuristic setting which is currently being written by Charles Goodwin, programmer of **Strangeloop** and the Amstrad version of **Shogun**. A science fiction alternative to **Fairlight** is all Dr Tim would say about Charles Goodwin's new game!

Finally, The Edge's portfolio of Spectrum releases includes an adventure creation system involving GRAX, the language Bo Jangeborg put together so he could write **Fairlight** in the first place. No firm release date has been set, but a summertime appearance is on the cards.

ICONS, MENUS and PSYCHE



A special mock-up screen provided for your delectation by The Edge's graphics maestro, Jack.

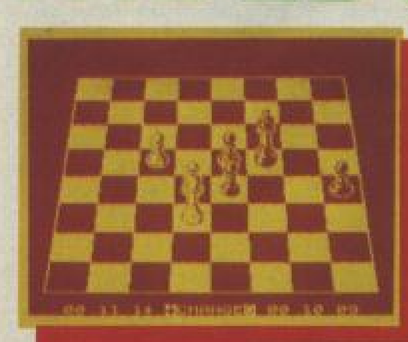
Mindstone puts you in control of a quartet of characters on the trail of, wait for it, the Mindstone! This object has wondrous capabilities — it focusses and amplifies the mental powers of the person who holds it, and can be used for good or evil, depending on the user's inclinations. Unfortunately, the Baddies have pinched it from the Goodies and it's up to your team to recover it before the forces of evil gain control of the land. During play, the characters move around in the current location, responding to commands in much the same way as the personalities who inhabit *Valhalla* stomp around their environment.

Each of the four characters in the game has different characteristics, based on physical strength, cunning and a psyche factor — magical ability. The quest begins in a bar, with the four adventurers assembled ready to begin their journey. Using the icon system, you can select which character you wish to command, and then a nested menu system pops into view revealing the options open to that character. The character's status and inventory information can then be called up onto the screen before attempting anything.

All sorts of nasty characters lurk in the locations that have to be passed through, including demons, vampires, fire monsters and mangatrons. Spells and weapons can be used to dispose of the denizens of evil, and combat is undertaken via a fight screen. Around forty objects can be found in the game: food, scrolls, tools, weapons, holy water and keys to name a few, and traders will be encountered from time to time. Skillful bartering allows the characters to buy, sell and exchange objects with merchants.

If one of the characters is killed, the adventure can continue, only things get a little bit harder.

£8.95 should be enough to set you off on *The Quest for the MIND STONE* . . .



The full 3D board and Staunton pieces from The Edge

CHESS IN THREE DIMENSIONS

There's more to computerised chess than meets the eye — all sorts of artificial intelligence routines are required to get a computer playing a good game of chess, and The Edge's chess game is set to play a mean game — perhaps the meanest game of Spectrum chess. Only time and computerised tournaments will decided whether their new program really does have the edge on the rest, but in terms of visual appearance and user friendliness it is likely to win hands down.

The game can be viewed and played in three ways and the player can toggle between views during the course of a game. Shown here is the basic 3D view, utilising the standard Staunton chess set — but the final version is likely to be accompanied by data for the Isle of Lewis set, and possibly an Alice in Wonderland set too.

The 3D board can be rotated and used to set up the pieces, with the computer playing Black or White. A 2D mode is also available, in which the pieces are displayed in the standard notation used in newspaper chess problems. Pieces are manipulated using icons, unless you're a real chess purist — there's nothing to stop you selecting the text-only mode.

In text mode, the program stores all the moves made by both players during the course of a game and they can be 'replayed' at the end, so it's an ideal way to learn and improve your game. The software will handle every chess rule, and computer chess congnoscenti will appreciate the fact that The Edge's chess program can handle the King-Bishop-Knight endgame which most chess programs won't admit is a draw.

No firm news is available as to title, price or release date as we go to press . . .

INTERGALACTIC DISASTER MOVIE

Another arcade adventure is on its way from Mastertronic, this time provided by the XCEL development team in Walsall, who are ***Stuart Middleton***, ***Ray Tredoux*** and ***Chris Harvey***.

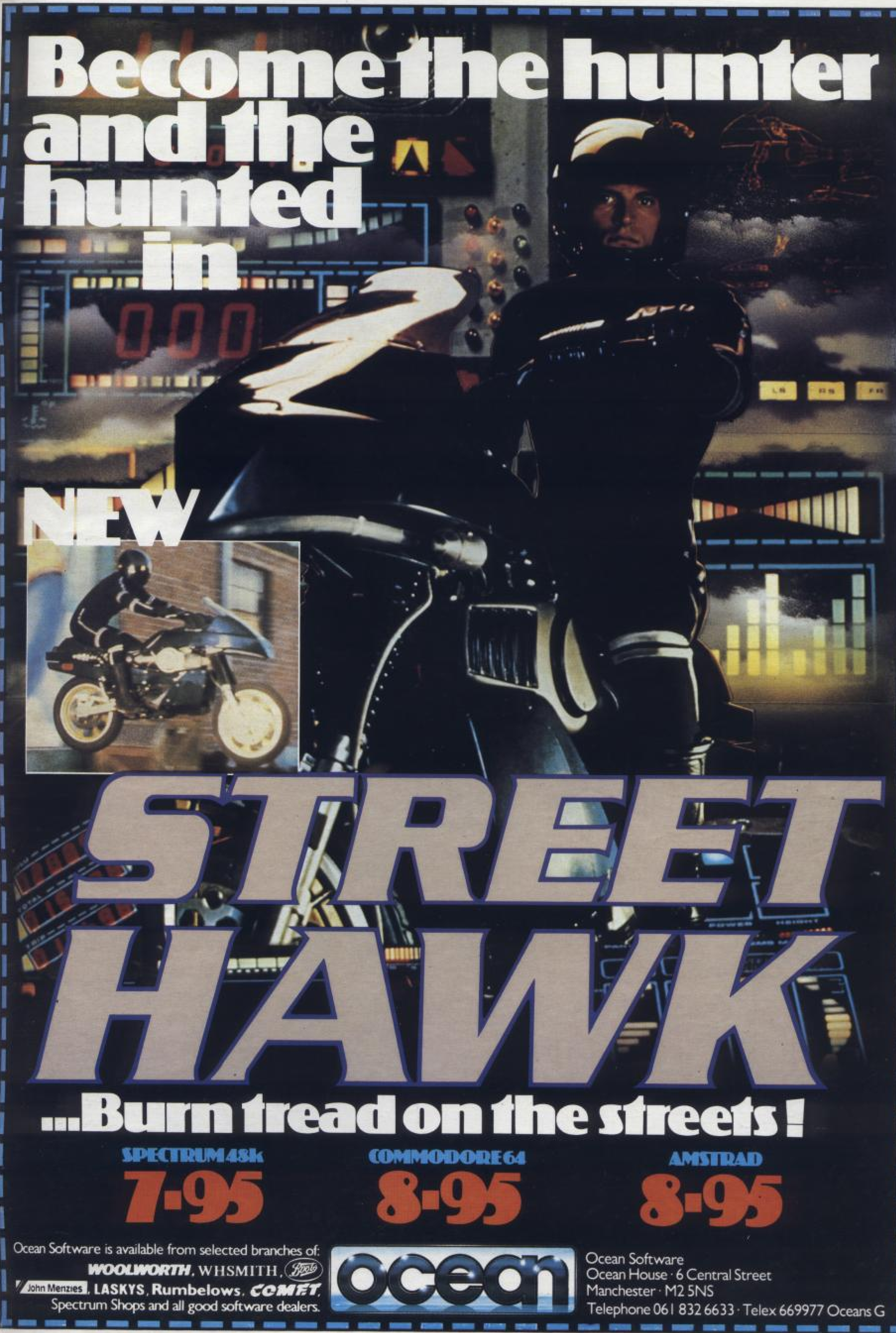
Starman Jones is the name of both the game and the central character. Poor old Jonesy's been sentenced to a three year tour of duty on a far-flung asteroid and he's just settling into his work when he discovers that a huge space freighter is out of control and is likely to crash on the planet around which his asteroid is orbiting. If the ship crashes, the planet goes up with it and Jones' asteroid will zoom off into the uncharted depths of space. Bye Bye Jonesy, for good.

Mr Jones was sent to the asteroid to clear up after a rather nasty accident in which the computer that controls all the asteroid's functions was buried in a rockfall. Having arrived, unpacked his intergalactic miner's travelbag and thought about moving the rocks that bury the main computer, Jones receives a distress call from the doomed space freighter.

There's no point in summoning assistance — the crash will happen in twelve hours and the nearest Interstellar Traffic Police outpost is sixteen hours away. Aaargh! All you can do is try to help Starman Jones repair the space ship.

The game contains 128 screens — 32 are set on the asteroid itself, 32 more are taken up by the stricken space freighter while the alien planet which the asteroid orbits occupies the remaining 64 screens. Oh dear! This isn't going to be easy . . .




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